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# TALES AND LEGENDS

OF

# SAXONY AND LUSATIA.

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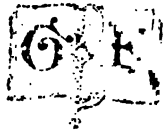
BY W. WESTAL

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY [illegible] W. PETHERICK



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By W. WESTALL.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY H. W. PETHERICK.

LONDON:
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# TALES AND LEGENDS OF SAXONY AND LUSATIA.

## THE MAIDEN OF THE MOOR.

### A LEGEND OF LUSATIA.

IN an embayed window of the banqueting-hall of Gottmar Castle stood Falcon von Gottmar, contemplating in melancholy reverie the vast and far-spreading domains of which he was the undisputed lord and master. High woodlands, crowned with rugged and gigantic masses of granite, rich and fertile valleys, picturesque villages, sparkling meadows and blooming corn-fields, wide heath and barren moor—the fine old castle itself, with its lordly turrets and coronetted battlements,

its servants and retainers—all were his. His, too, the pomp, circumstance, and power, that appertained to the position of a great German noble of the middle ages. And Falcon was young and handsome, tall and stalwart, and though, with his white, cloudy hair and deep blue eyes, he had in moments of repose a somewhat dreamy look, animation or excitement imparted to his features a wild and attractive beauty, that, together with his courteous manner and generous character, made him the idol alike of friends and dependents. And yet he was not happy! Deep care sat upon his brow, sad forebodings quenched the brightness of his countenance. His thoughts were of the curse that so long had blighted and now had so nearly destroyed his ancient race—a race of antiquity so great that it numbered amongst its ancestors the last high priest of the Wendish god, Mahr.

For many generations no direct heir had been born to the house of Gottmar—a cruel and malignant fate forbad the barons of the house, under a terrible penalty, ever to marry. Their brides never failed to meet, generally on the very eve of their nuptials, with a sudden, often a violent death; and such a

catastrophe the bridegrooms were never known long to survive.

The honours of the house had descended to the collateral branches, and of these Falcon was the last representative; he had succeeded to the title and estates on the death of his cousin, who, together with his intended wife, had been killed by a stroke of lightning on the day before their intended marriage. The curse was all the more dreaded as its origin was unknown; the same mystery shrouded alike its cause and the means of evading its consequences.

"And all this is mine, mine, to be enjoyed companionless and alone, to pass to strangers when I die!" exclaimed Falcon aloud, striking his brow with his hand. "And not to know the cause! Even to criminals and malefactors is it given to know for what, and why they are punished. But I!—I am compelled to forego the pleasures of love, the honours of paternity, the duty of perpetuating an ancient and honourable house, and wherefore? Surely Heaven is unjust!"

"Not so, my dear Falcon! Heaven is never really unjust; we are blind and erring mortals, surrounded

by an infinite and mysterious spirit-world—linked to ours by unseen ties—controlling and influencing us for good and for evil; but all, the invisible and the visible, are in the hands of One who cannot, will not be unjust. The injustice exists only in our own distorted imaginings and vain thoughts. For what is injustice? does not our greatest happiness often contain the germs of future pain? is not deep sorrow the frequent harbinger of lasting peace? Remember that the Christian Church, and our holy faith, have their origin in the most terrible crime man ever committed—the murder of the Son of God! —a mystery so great as to dwarf all others, and yet to it we owe our salvation."

The speaker was an old man, clad in the garb of an ecclesiastic; his fine and benevolent countenance beamed with the light of intelligence and wisdom. He was the chaplain of the castle, and the guide, protector, and friend of Falcon. Balthazar had buried three barons of Gottmar. The misfortunes of the house excited his deepest pity. He had made every effort to discover their hidden cause; for many years these efforts had been foiled, and accident alone had revealed to him the secret that long and

patient inquiry had failed to discover. A keen student and a lover of books, he was deeply learned in astrology, and had often, in secret, dipped into the forbidden arts of magic and witchcraft. The library of the castle was his favourite place of resort; it contained many rare and valuable books and manuscripts, and in the perusal of these the chaplain spent his happiest hours. One day, in an eager search after further treasures, he entirely emptied of its contents an old oaken chest. On regarding it attentively he felt certain it must have a false bottom. He soon found the means of opening it, and discovered, in the secret receptacle, an ancient moth-eaten parchment, filled with scarcely legible characters in monkish Latin. It was the history of the curse. Eagerly Balthazar possessed himself of its contents, and then transcribed the history in a fair hand, so that his pupil might easily make himself master of it, resolving, on the first favourable opportunity, to acquaint him with the discovery he had made. When he overheard the soliloquy in the banqueting-hall, he deemed the opportunity one vouchsafed by Providence itself; little thinking how fatal the event he considered so fortunate would

prove to Falcon, or how terribly appropriate were the words: "Does not our greatest happiness often contain the germs of future disaster?"

"Your words sound like truth, father," said the baron; "but tell me, can your learning and wisdom penetrate the secret of the curse that has well-nigh destroyed my race, or suggest the means of overcoming it?"

"Not my wisdom, Falcon, but a happy accident has at length raised the veil!"

"Balthazar!"

"Be true to thyself, my son. Hast thou courage to dive into the dark past? Read, then, this roll attentively! I believe it points out a way by which the curse may be removed, and that if thou follow my counsel there is happiness yet in store for thee, and a bright future for the house of Gottmar."

The chaplain took from the folds of his robe a parchment, placed it in the hands of his wondering pupil, and withdrew as quietly as he had come. Falcon opened the manuscript, and by the red light of the setting sun read the following narrative:—

"This is the last confession of Baron Albrecht von Gottmar, written by me, his confessor, at his

request, in order that it may be kept in perpetual remembrance by every succeeding chief of the house of Gottmar. My great uncle, Hubert, the tenth baron, was a mighty hunter; day and night, summer and winter, he ranged the surrounding forests with a great train of horses, hounds, and huntsmen. The chase of the wild boar was his favourite sport; they were strictly and carefully preserved, and no one but himself was allowed to take the life of a single tusker. Hundreds of these animals roamed through the vast woodlands of pine and beech that covered the slopes of the hills and over the boggy heath and gloomy moor that extend beyond the confines of the forest. One day an old boar, the giant of his race, digging fiercely with his tusks, uncovered the sources of a wonderful spring, from which clear and sparkling water flowed in such unstinted abundance that a bright and babbling brook was ere long formed, which, coursing down the hill-side, sped across the heath until it was lost to sight in the far-off valleys. With a view to keep ever in memory such a wonderful event Baron Hubert established, at the source of the boar-found stream, a village, to which he gave the name of

'Ebersdorf' (Boar's village). On the very day of the discovery of the spring on the western declivity of the mountains, another boar laid bare, on the high and heath-clad plain, at the foot of their eastern declivity, a second and a still more abundant spring, which, bubbling upward through the gold-red granite sand, formed a lakelet, and gave rise to a broad brook, so crystal-like in its brightness and purity that it took at once the name of Silverbrook. Here too Hubert established a village, and as hard by was found an extensive peat-moss, to which people from all round the country resorted to buy turf, the place became of so much importance that the baron set over it his foster-brother and steward, Wittekend. Wittekend prospered well in his new calling, his master built for him a house, and gave him every proof of his confidence and love. This was the more remarkable, inasmuch as the turf-master was a man of gloomy and sombre character, and of stern and taciturn manner. But when Wittekend one day brought a wife to his cottage, a girl of wonderful beauty—from no one knew where—the surprise of everybody, even of the baron himself, was unbounded. Wittekend's hardness visibly

softened during his year of wedded life; but when, at the end of that brief period, his wife died in giving birth to a daughter, the original gloom and sternness of his disposition increased tenfold, and he rarely entered into conversation with any one save his master. The latter took great interest in the little motherless child, who received the name of Auriola, sent a nurse specially to have her in charge, and promised Wittekend that when she was of age to marry he would portion her handsomely.

"Time rolled on; Auriola grew in years and beauty, and Hubert, yet in the prime of life, unmarried, and with heart hitherto untouched by love, yielded at last to the witching charms of the turf-master's daughter, and, long before he demanded her hand of Wittekend, the great noble and the village maiden were already betrothed lovers. In the father, however, Hubert found an unexpected obstacle to his wishes. Wittekend declared that his daughter was not fitted, either by birth or breeding, to mate with so rich and mighty a baron; that he could not even believe that his master honestly desired to wed her. Besides, he had promised her to an old friend and companion, an overseer in the

mine, and he was not the man to break his word. Hubert grew angry, alternately threatened and reproached his foster-brother. The fierce temper of the latter was roused, and, hurling defiance at his lord, he dragged Auriola from his presence and led her back to the cottage on the heath.

"The grief of the maiden was deep and lasting, for her love for Hubert was great. A hundred times daily she stood at the cottage-door, and anxiously scanned the wide heath for a fleeting glance of her lover; and when her father was absent she would betake herself to the margin of the lakelet, and, seating herself under the wide-spreading branches of an ancient beech, watch in pensive solitude the shining pearls ever rising from the hidden fountains far below in the red-gold sand. One evening, as the setting sun tinged the weird-looking heath with a yet deeper crimson, Auriola sat by the spring in deep and anxious thought. Looking up, she saw, silently and lovingly regarding her—her lover. With a cry of joy she sprang to his arms. He besought her to leave her father and accompany him to a cottage near the castle, there to remain until he brought a priest to unite them in marriage.

The maiden yielded. Next morning, as Hubert went forth to fetch the priest, he found himself face to face with Wittekend. His rage and fury were boundless; he even threatened the baron with his hatchet, until at length the latter was compelled in self-defence to draw his sword. Then ensued a fierce and terrible combat; but Hubert's arm was paralyzed by the thought that he was fighting with his foster-brother and the father of his bride. No similar scruple weakened the demon-like energy with which Wittekend strove to slay the baron. A hundred times had the lover parried the swift strokes of the hatchet; three times had he held his hand and spared the turfmaster's life. Foot to foot, hand to hand, round and round they fought, little recking the piercing screams and pitiful prayers of Auriola, until at last the noble's sword snapped off at the hilt. Wittekend, eagerly seizing the opportunity, raised high his axe, cleft his opponent's skull in twain, and Baron Hubert von Gottmar fell forward on the turf, a bleeding and mutilated corpse. Still not satisfied, the turfmaster seized his daughter in his arms, and, dragging her to the golden fountain, lifted her up and threw her into its waters,

beneath which she sank to rise no more in mortal shape. Then, raising his hands, he turned towards the towers of Gottmar, cursed the race that owned them, and calling to his aid the powers of the nether world, prayed that until Auriola's virgin honour should be vindicated no baron of Gottmar might embrace living woman as bride.

"'So long as this be not done,' exclaimed Wittekend, 'so long shalt thou, hapless child, be of me accursed—so long shall thy spirit be doomed to work evil to thy lover's house!'

"With these words the turfmaster fled into the forest, and was never again seen of man.

"But his ban has wrought its evil course. Never since has a lord of Gottmar led to his halls a wife, and the old moss, now a fathomless and quaking quicksand, and the golden fountain are still haunted by the unquiet spirit of the beautiful and unfortunate Auriola.

"OTTO LEIMERITZ,
"*Castle Chaplain.*"

As the sun with ruddy glow disappeared behind the distant hills, Falcon finished the reading of the

parchment. He leaned his head on his hand, and sat for long in deep, earnest, thought. After a while he was roused by the returning footsteps of the chaplain.

"Hast thou read?" demanded the latter.

"Are you ready to swear to me, Balthazar, that this terrible narrative is true?"

"Have I ever given thee cause, Lord Falcon, to doubt my word?"

"Forgive me, father! But this confession of my ancestor has so confused me that I can scarce distinguish truth from falsehood. But tell me, what think you? Is it possible that a curse so fearful, with cause so inadequate, can still have potency?"

"Nature is a mighty mystery," answered the priest; "in her secret and higher workings such terms as 'cause and effect' are only empty words. Who knows where is the loom that weaves the tangled web of fate and destiny? But we do know that to the earnest searcher after truth—searcher of high courage, strong will, and pure heart—many mysteries are opened—many hidden things revealed."

"How think you, then, the ban can be lifted?"

asked the baron, whose mind, German though he was, did not soar so high into the regions of the transcendental as that of Balthazar.

"Why not? Nature has no poison for which she does not provide an antidote. It is for thee to expiate the sin of Hubert."

"The man is dead; can another suffer in his place?"

"Can a pupil of mine yet doubt? The will kills and the will makes alive. If it be given to one man to ban, and bring evil on unborn generations, so is it granted to another to combat the evil and remove the curse."

Falcon drew nearer to Balthazar, saying, in a low, impassioned voice, "I swear, father, I will be the man to remove it or—perish. Tell me, what shall I do? I listen and obey!"

The chaplain stood up and pointed to the open heath between the two extensive belts of forest, dimly discernible by the light of the rising moon. "Thou must often have heard it said, my son, that in yonder stretch of black moorland lies the spot on all the earth most fatal to thee and thy race. The broad track at the edge of the big beech wood

is the ancient moss where once stood the cottage of Wittekend the turfmaster. In its midst there is a deep and wide grotto-like well, from whose hidden fountains rises the brook whose clear stream fertilizes thy vast possessions. Men call the place 'Goldborn,' and hold it accursed. No one will pass by it; no one dares to fetch water from the spring. The few who venture near the 'Goldborn,' return trembling with fear, and declare they have seen strange and awesome sights; nor can it be disputed that many, I among the rest, have seen a ghostly maiden of shadowy and transparent form raising, in a pitcher of antique shape, water from the grotto, and pouring it back, rainbow-like, through the white gleaming sun-rays or yellow moonbeams. Dares any one to address her, she vanishes slowly from sight, and, veiled in an ever overhanging pearly cloud, descends into the subterranean recesses of the fountain."

"You speak of the maiden of the moor," said Falcon; "often have I heard of her, but have never seen her."

"So people call the phantom; and the apparition first drew my attention to the place she haunts, and

the sagas that are told of it. Since the discovery of Lord Carl's manuscript I see, in the maiden of the moor, the unhappy spirit of the murdered Auriola."

"Do you mean, then, that in this ghost are offered the means of expiation?"

"Of that I am convinced, and through thee only, my son, can the expiation be accomplished."

"Through me, father Balthazar? me!"

"Thou art guiltless of wrong, untainted by the world, a votary of nature. Thine are the pure mind, the strong will, the sympathetic heart. For thee, Lord Falcon, nothing should be impossible."

"But how, my father, how?"

Balthazar paused before he replied.

"Thy heart is yet free, but it yearns for the companionship of another, a wifely, a kindred, and a sympathetic heart. Couldst thou sympathize with and pity Auriola, wert thou to see her?"

"You ask me strange questions, worthy father. Do you really suppose it possible that the poor girl's sad story has failed deeply to move me? I compassionate her fate, and, the curse apart, would venture anything to settle her perturbed ghost."

"Durst thou, then, accost her?"

"The spirit of a beautiful maiden has no terrors for me."

"Avoid, then, the Goldborn no longer," said Balthazar. "Thou art an admirer of the graceful denizens of the air; the domain of the maiden of the moor is rich in feathery songsters and butterflies of gorgeous hue. They are her courtiers and attendants; when they are present she is near—go view them to-morrow."

The baron took the hand of Balthazar in his own, pressed it in token of acquiescence, and the priest, without saying another word, withdrew.

## CHAPTER II.

The next morning Falcon, equipped with hunting-knife and boar-spear, took his way across the moor. As he approached the Goldborn, the purple heather gave place to long, yellow, and matted grass, and the ground yielded to his tread, and swayed to and fro as if underneath were a vast and hollow space. Birds and butterflies of brilliant plumage circled round him, and so greatly excited his admiration and curiosity that he endeavoured to capture some, and in the ardour of his pursuit had almost forgotten the maiden of the moor, when the sound of running water fell on his ear, and he saw near him a circle of red granite blocks, from whose midst issued in eddying rout a crystal brook. On a piece of the granite sat a girl, gazing intently into the flowing stream. A butterfly, escaping from Falcon's hand,

settled on the maiden's brow. As she turned round, he sought to excuse himself with the words, "Pardon me if I have—." But as he regarded her the words died on his tongue. He saw before him the loveliest creature his eyes had ever beheld; no transparent, vanishing being, melting away into cloudland, but a living and smiling maiden of rare and radiant beauty. She had a pure and noble brow, from which the golden hair—flowing behind her, and sweeping the wild flowers at her feet—was confined by a simple Wendish coif; her cheeks wore the livery of the pale rose, a laugh hung on her coral lips, and the light of her eyes seemed to have been kindled at the altar of the god of love himself.

The nymph's white and shapely arms were bare to the shoulder, her pale robe, reaching to the ankle, was surmounted by a low bodice of blue velvet, trimmed with silver; her slender waist was begirt by a silver belt whose large golden clasp bore the crest of the Gottmars — a sacrificial axe and stone.

She smiled archly at the astonished and embarrassed Falcon. "You, then, are the robber of my

sweetest thoughts? No wonder that I began to feel sad and forsaken!"

"What?" stammered Falcon. "I steal your thoughts?"

"Strange man!" said the maiden, in a clear, bell-like voice. "Are you surprised that I amuse myself and sport with my dreams and reveries? The butterflies you have chased and caught are the children of my heart, my dearest fancies, which I have sent out to play in the sunlight. Return them to me, living and unharmed, or I will complain that you have broken my heart."

"But who are you, sweet maiden?"

"Men call me Auriola. You I know right well. You are Falcon von Gottmar, the accursed."

"Ay, the accursed!" repeated Falcon, with bent head, covering his eyes with his hands. When he removed them Auriola stood before him, looking with her strange, unfathomable eyes searchingly into his. At her feet he observed a pitcher of that unusual, but not ungraceful, form of which examples are even yet often found amongst the ruins of Lusatian Sorbwendish settlements.

"What wish you of me, my hapless Auriola? Can I help you?"

The girl laughed. "You have come to me," she said. "I did not call you. I call no one; but they who come to me of their own free will must do my bidding. You chased and captured some of my cherished thoughts, therefore you must be punished. Come!"

She took Falcon by the hand and led him farther over the moor to the true "Goldborn," whence, from a grotto-like, granite-surrounded opening in the earth, a still broader, clearer, more silvery stream issued forth. Then, descending into the grotto, she filled her pitcher with water, and, returning, seated herself on the margin of the fountain by Lord Falcon's side. His heart went forth to his beautiful companion. He felt himself possessed by a burning, passionate, all-devouring love. He recked not of Auriola's mysterious nature—mortal maiden, spirit of health, or goblin damned, she must be his. She seemed to divine his thoughts.

"Canst thou love, Falcon?"

Instead of answer the youth clasped her in his arms and pressed an ardent kiss on her brow—a

brow whose icy coldness seemed for a moment to freeze the blood in his veins and stop the beatings of his heart.

"You must watch with me," said Auriola; and there was a tone of deep sadness in her sweet voice. "We must wait until my heart is again my own."

She gazed earnestly over the moor, and, as she gazed, the butterflies arrested their flight, came circling back, and hung in a little cloud over the fountain.

"Now I am myself again! What fails lies in you. Give heed."

Auriola filled the hollow of her left hand with water from the pitcher, reached her right to Falcon, who, encircling her with his arm, and putting his face close to hers, watched her strange proceedings with wondering looks. She blew three times into the water until it spread over her hand, even to the tips of her rosy fingers.

"Look, look!" she cried; "what dost thou see?"

A picture had formed itself in the water.

In a green meadow, near a grove of beech-trees,

through whose branches flamed the golden gloaming, a youth was kneeling before a maiden, on one of whose fingers he placed a ring of gold. For a moment the picture was clear and bright, then it gradually faded away and was lost in the air.

In spite of his love the baron's fears were roused.

"What means this, Auriola?" he asked. "No witch-like enchantments are needed to make my heart thine."

"Watch and wait. Mortals, as well as denizens of the nether world, yearn to raise the dark veil. We seek only to know if our future answers to our hopes and wishes."

"Our future! our future!" murmured Falcon.

"Say, if you prefer it, *your* future," answered Auriola, again filling her hand with water, into which she blew as before. Another picture appeared. A rider, looking fearfully backward, galloped across a dark and gloomy heath and disappeared in the distance.

"What does that betoken?" asked Von Gottmar.

The maiden shook her head and took in her hand more water. Out of it rose a many-towered castle, from one of whose balconies hung a ladder of ropes,

up which climbed a man. As he placed his foot on the balcony the picture vanished.

"Strange! Was not that my castle?" asked the baron.

"No! Now can you still love?" said Auriola earnestly, and almost menacingly.

Falcon replied as before, by an ardent embrace, and Auriola, with a sigh, once more filled her hand with water. As her breath dispersed it the baron saw the counterfeit presentment of a great hall, brilliant with light and bright with the gay dresses of lords and ladies, who danced merrily to the strains of lively music.

"A sudden pain has come over me," said Falcon. "My heart is heavy and my soul troubled. Why is this?"

"Be still and watch," earnestly spoke Auriola, extending for the fourth time her moistened palm.

Her companion regarded the scene wonderingly and almost awe-struck. A storm, as if the wind-god rode in the darkening air, howled through the forest. The moon's rays pierced the drifting clouds, rendering visible an open space surrounded by tall trees and rugged rocks. Out of the forest came a

carriage drawn by four horses, driving in the direction of the open space. The figure of a maiden emerged from the darkness; with sorrowful face she beckoned the carriage onward and then disappeared into the forest. A flash of lightning darted from the black vault overhead, striking and setting on fire a gigantic beech, by whose light the carriage went slowly and hesitatingly forward. As the last scene closed and the picture vanished, Auriola bowed her head, and tears coursed rapidly down her cheeks.

"Beautiful enchantress!" said Falcon, "why perform these mysteries if they make thee sad?"

"I weep because true love is no more to be found in all the earth."

"Oh, say not so! There is yet to be found in the world deep, true, pure, never-dying love. I feel it, sweet Auriola. I, who have never before loved, love thee with all my heart, with all the strength of my soul. Auriola, I will be thine for ever; wilt thou be mine?"

"Keep thy word," said the voice of the maiden, as it seemed from the air above, and Falcon felt her melt away and vanish from his embrace. The

butterflies flew over the heath, a fleecy cloud sunk down into the grotto, and the lord of Gottmar was alone on the enchanted moor. Troubled with the thought that he had given his heart, and promised his love, to a being not of this world, he walked rapidly homeward through the deepening twilight, resolved to take counsel with Balthazar, in whose deep wisdom he hoped to find the means of bringing back peace to his agitated soul.

## CHAPTER III.

The chaplain was not to be found, and the tired baron went to his chamber. He spent the night in feverish dreams, in which were re-enacted all the events of the day; but with the coming of dawn all his doubts and fears were dispersed, and as the sun rose he left the castle, and again betook himself to the haunt of the maiden of the moor. But he found her not—hour after hour he paced slowly round the fountain, looking intently at times into the depths of the grotto. Still no Auriola appeared to his longing gaze, and he reluctantly and pensively turned his steps backward. As he reached the border of the forest, where tall trees cast their shadows on the rich meadow grass, he saw, coming towards him, the object of his search, swinging in her hand the never-absent pitcher. As she swung it a crystal stream

sprung forth, and, catching the glowing rays of the setting sun, spread itself like a garland in the evening air.

"Auriola!" exclaimed Falcon, as he saw this charming picture, and, springing forward to meet the maiden, seized her hand, and, kneeling on the sward, placed on her slender finger a golden ring. Then he rose and would have embraced her, but she repulsed him, and pointing with her ring-bedecked finger, exclaimed, "Look there!"

Falcon followed the direction of her hand, and saw, above the hovering crowd of butterflies, the figures of Auriola and himself, moving to and fro in the beams of the sinking sun. He was deeply moved.

"Is that truth or illusion?" he asked, in bewildered accents.

"I show thee but the real," answered the maiden of the moor; "the air is obnoxious to a lie, it reflects only the truth."

She swung the pitcher round her head, and the figures disappeared.

"Are you true?" demanded Auriola. "I should be most wretched if I thought you could ever for-

get that you have to-day been solemnly betrothed to me."

Falcon was so greatly disconcerted with the turn matters had taken, and especially with the picture in the air, that he scarcely remarked the maiden's presence, and the same feeling of anguish, the same presentiment of coming evil, that he had experienced the previous evening, again overwhelmed him. When he turned to question Auriola she had disappeared. The sky had become overcast, the moon behind him looked solemn and still; heavy clouds threw their dark shadows on the distant heath, and the rising wind soughed mournfully through the forest, as Lord Falcon bent his hurried footsteps towards the towers of Gottmar. He hastened breathless into the library, where sat Balthazar, the chaplain.

"Save me, father, oh save me! Through your counsel I have allied myself with a being not of mortal mould; to atone for the folly of an ancestor I have ruined my own soul. I have succumbed to passion and emotion, and to the intoxicating magic of more than mortal beauty. I have solemnly betrothed myself to the maiden of the moor, and am

now, and ever, to her and her enchantments, a helpless captive."

The priest, on hearing what had passed between Auriola and his pupil, became anxious and thoughtful, and reflected long before he attempted to quiet Falcon's perturbed spirit.

"Because the maiden of the moor," he said, "is not a being of our world, hast thou nothing to fear from thy betrothment to her; she cannot love as mortal maidens love, nor exact from thee the same love they exact. Thy soul must be loyal to her, and if thou wouldst redeem the race of Gottmar from the curse, so must thou faithfully obey the behests of Auriola and ever remain her constant friend. But this spirit-love, for one in whose being are mingled the natures of woman, sprite, and angel, need not hinder thee from loving and mating with a lady of thy own degree."

"But I love Auriola, Balthazar. I love her to distraction, to madness. My heart has no room for other love."

"This passion must shortly calm down; a creature that vanishes from thy arms into cloud-land cannot long be the object of such fierce love. Seek out a

noble maiden of thy own rank, and this ghostly enthralment will give place to other feelings. But mind! keep secret thy relations with Auriola from every one of womankind, or dire disaster may overtake thee and thy house!"

After his conversation with the chaplain Lord Falcon ceased his visits to the moor and spent entire days pacing, in deep thought, the great banqueting-hall of the castle, pausing often to scan the portraits hanging on the walls, particularly that of the ill-fated Baron Hubert, in whose features he traced a strong resemblance to his own. As the tumult in his soul subsided, his impulse to follow the advice of Balthazar, and find a noble lady whom he might bring home as bride to the dwelling of his fathers, took shape and substance. It would not be hard, he thought, to meet with a maiden who, in spite of the curse, would be willing to accept the position of Baroness von Gottmar.

Deep in the mountains, three leagues distant from Gottmar, there lived a rich and powerful noble—Count Benno von Teufelsberg—whose castle was dimly visible from the summit of Falcon's donjon keep, and whose daughter, the Countess Hildegard,

was renowned for her beauty and virtue. The baron determined to make her acquaintance, and as his family and hers had always been on intimate terms, and he enjoyed the friendship of her father, he called for his black horse, Stormraven, and galloped across the hills to Teufelsberg Castle. The knight was not at home, but Hildegard, a tall, dark-haired beauty of high breeding, received and entertained his guest with easy grace. The lady had been much abroad, and had seen more of men and courts than Falcon, whom she greatly interested by her anecdotes of great people and her descriptions of foreign travel. Then the conversation turned to their own land and people, and the baron took occasion to let his companion know that he had reason to believe that the curse of Gottmar had, in his person, lost its power. He prolonged his visit, under the pretext of waiting for the count, to the largest possible extent, and he left Teufelsberg greatly charmed, and almost in love, with the beautiful Hildegard. As Falcon rode home through the darkness, the bright stars gleaming in the deep blue vault above him, his thoughts were given, not to Auriola, but to the lovely daughter of Count Benno. Forgetful of the present, he paid

no heed to his horse, and, beyond an occasional touch of the spur, left him uncontrolled. The spirited animal galloped onward through the forest, finding by instinct the obscure and overshadowed track. The trees became thinner, patches of open ground were more frequent, and when Falcon, by a sudden starting of his steed, was roused from his dreams, he found himself between the forest and a stretch of wild moorland, whose aspect seemed not unfamiliar to him. The horse, so long his own master, refused to be checked, and bounded over the heath. Horror! The baron saw before him the Goldborn, and heard the rushing of its waters. By a violent effort he arrested the career of Stormraven, and turned him back towards the wood. As he did so, he heard a voice call out in clear and silvery, but menacing tones, "Be true, be true!" He looked back and beheld, sitting on the margin of the spring—Auriola!—her long, golden hair trailing on the ground, a white veil glistening with dewdrops covering her face, and holding aloft in the air Falcon's golden betrothal ring. Over the maiden's head hung a mass of white fleecy clouds, formed like the arches of a gothic cathedral. Whilst she

still pointed with the ring, a white, luminous spot descended from the clouds, and out of it grew shapes and figures, like to those in the second picture in the air; and as the terrified Stormraven galloped homeward the warning words again rang in his master's ears, "Be true, be true!"

## CHAPTER IV.

The baron, tossed to and fro between his growing love for Hildegard and the feeling of half love, half fear, with which he regarded Auriola, resolved to seek once more an interview with the latter, in order, if possible, to assuage her anger and learn his own fate. Again he trod the silent moor, and paced with anxious footsteps the borders of the haunted well; but the maiden of the moor answered not to his summons; hour after hour he waited, and though conscious of a *presence*, none was visible. Descending the grotto, he looked intently into the depths of the spring. Suspended in the crystal water was the lifeless body of a beautiful maiden with long flowing hair, the right hand pointing solemnly upward! Fascinated by the horrid sight,

Falcon was seized with an almost irresistible impulse to plunge into the dark depths of the fathomless pool—an impulse that only by a strong effort of will, and by flying precipitately from the spot, was he able to overcome.

Although for a while greatly agitated by the emotions and doubts arising from the last ominous appearance of Auriola and his visit to the moor, Falcon found in the society of Hildegard an antidote for his troubles. He loved and was beloved; not this time by a weird and unearthly being, but by a maiden of mortal mould. Hildegard cared not for the ban; deeply religious, she had unswerving faith in the Church, and with its help, and strong in her panoply of piety, believed she could bid defiance to all the machinations of the evil one, and to his influence alone she attributed the curse of the race of Gottmar. But Count Benno did not share in the confidence of his daughter, and when Falcon formally demanded of him her hand he sternly refused. "No, Baron von Gottmar; I respect you and pity the misfortunes of your house. I thank you for the honour you have done me in desiring to wed my daughter; but as I believe bestowing her hand on

you would be giving her over to early and violent death, and because you belong to a race accursed, I must withhold my consent. And for the future, Von Gottmar," he added, "I am compelled to ask you to discontinue your visits here, so long, at least, as Hildegard remains at Teufelsberg."

This was a sentence against which there was no appeal, and Falcon left the heath discomfited and unhappy; though he was consoled, by receiving the next day a billet that Hildegard contrived to send him.

* * * * * *

It was autumn; the days were growing shorter and darker, storms of wind and rain hurtled through the forest; the tall pine-trees wept, as they bent their stately heads to the gale, and saw their golden-tinted leaves tossed on high in the nebulous air.

As the Lady Hildegard sat in her turret-chamber, and listened to the howling of the hurricane without, she shuddered, and drew her silken robe more closely around her. By the soft light of a silver lamp she turned over the pages of a richly-illuminated manuscript, and read of the loves of

Tristan and Isolda. But her heart was not in her book, and ever and anon, as she read, she turned her beautiful face to the thickly-curtained window and listened intently. A stone fell on the balcony—another, and Hildegard, going behind the arras, brought out a rope ladder, which, after securely fastening to the iron railings of the balcony, she let drop into the garden below. Yet a minute, and she was clasped in her lover's arms. They exchanged vows of everlasting constancy. Hildegard swore that neither the Gottmar curse nor her father's will should prevent her becoming Lord Falcon's bride. The baron took from his breast a golden ring, and whilst he was in the very act of encircling with it her slender finger, a sudden gust blew open the window, and another ring, broken, and thrown by an unseen hand, rolled into the middle of the room. Hildegard was astonished and alarmed.

"What means this, my Falcon?" she cried. "From whence comes this broken ring?"

Falcon recognized with terror the ring he had given to the maiden of the moor, and, hastening to the balcony, peered into the darkness, fully expecting

to see the angry countenance of Auriola. Nothing was to be seen but wildly-drifting clouds; nothing to be heard but the voice of the storm. As the baron turned to re-enter the chamber he heard Hildegard utter a cry of fear, and, looking towards the door, beheld the stern visage and lowering brow of Count Benno von Teufelsberg.

"What means this intrusion, my Lord Baron?" said the count. "Were I to punish such an insult as it deserves—as my forefathers would have punished it—I should hang you from that window by which you have entered my house like a robber, and cast your body into the moat below. As for you, Hildegard," turning to his daughter, "I have warned you enough. You are determined to join yourself to this accursed race, to bring destruction on yourself and your lover. So be it! your fate be on your own head! I withdraw my refusal; henceforth you are affianced lovers." Falcon had not expected so agreeable a termination to his adventure; the ominous speech of the count was but a slight alloy to his pleasure; the episode of the broken ring was quite forgotten, and he spent the night in the castle as the guest of Hildegard's father.

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The lord of Gottmar stood in one of the embayed windows of the castle; his companion was Balthazar the chaplain.

"Why," said the latter, "why didst thou not tell me all this sooner, my son? The fact of Auriola not meeting thee, nor responding to thy summons, should have made thee more cautious, instead of more reckless. But it was ever so with youth—to act first and think afterwards—to run into danger and difficulty and *then* ask counsel of older and wiser heads. Tell me, hast thou again of late visited the moor?"

"No! why should I? The foolish witch wishes to see me no more; and I begin to think my betrothal to her like the pictures in the air; her warnings and her love are all phantasies of the imagination."

"Forget not, Falcon," said the priest, "that the mysterious being whom thou art abusing holds for weal or woe thy fate, and the fate of thy house, in her hands, and only by following my counsel can she be appeased."

"Your counsel!" replied the baron, laughing

scornfully. "Your counsel has placed me in the power of a spiteful phantom, a thing of air. But for the foolish old parchment and your advice I should not now have a ghost for mistress."

Balthazar heeded not the scorn of his pupil. "Bluster, my dear Falcon," he said calmly, "will avail thee nothing. The matter is a serious one, indeed only courage and wisdom can save thee. Auriola is angered against thee. In the flesh, or out of the flesh, women always remain women—easily offended, they are as easily appeased. Flattery is the surest way to their hearts—tell the ugliest of them she is a beauty, and she smiles, though her mirror tells her 'Thou liest.' Tell them the plain, unvarnished truth, and they hold thee for a coarse, uncultured clown."

"Well, then," asked the baron curtly, for he did not sympathize with Balthazar's views about the sex to which Hildegard belonged, "what must be done?"

"Throw the ring in the fountain and beg Auriola's forgiveness."

"Suppose she comes not?"

"Be satisfied; that will mean she forgives thee! Here is the ring; I have soldered it."

Falcon received the ring from the chaplain, and went once more to the golden fountain.

The autumnal fogs and the lowering sky gave to the heath a more than usual gloom—not a living creature was to be seen—not a sound, save the lap of running water, to be heard. The moor yielded more than ever before to his tread; a desolation as of death was around him.

Calling, with a beating heart, upon Auriola, and bending over the pool, he threw in it the ring. Then, trembling with suppressed feeling, and a strange sense of fear, he covered his face with his hands. When he removed them, and again peered into the grotto, everything was as before—no Auriola! He turned to depart, and had scarcely walked a step when the heavy clouds begun gradually to withdraw themselves towards the borders of the heath; a gleam of sunshine broke through the fog, and Falcon saw in the distance, sitting on the granite rock as when he first beheld her, the graceful form of the maiden of the moor. She was scattering from her Wendish pitcher water in the air, and the fluid as it fell assumed fantastic and garland-like shapes.

"Auriola!" cried the baron in a trembling voice. The phantom beckoned him to her.

"My father was right," she said; "all the Gottmars are inconstant flatterers. Well is it for you that you have come here freely, and called me ere I called you! You have kept your promise very badly, and you will again forget it, if I do not give you something by which to remember me. This will keep from you all evil, and prevent you from being unfaithful to me in spirit, as you already are in heart!"

With these words Auriola hung round Falcon's neck a fairy-like chain, woven from her own golden hair, to which was attached a minute casket, curiously inlaid with the wings of the peacock-eyed and purple butterflies. In the casket glistened a single drop of water from the haunted fountain.

"Lose or give this talisman," spoke Auriola, "and nothing can hinder thy destruction, and the destruction of thy ancient race. The drop of water is a part of my heart, and only this symbol of my love can protect thee from the effects of my father's curse."

As the maiden of the moor slowly and sadly spoke these words, Falcon looked earnestly into her tender and beautiful eyes, and in that moment all his love for her returned in full force. She read in his coun-

tenance the workings of his mind, and after touching with her cool finger his burning brow, she dipped her hand into the pitcher, and, blowing in her palm, held it up to the light. Many figures appeared, but no distinct picture was evolved, all were cloudy and illegible.

"It is no use!" said Auriola pensively, "thy future is dark, thy fate obscure. Hadst thou still loved me as when by this spring I received thy first embrace, so would the pictures in the air be now as clear as then. Fare thee well, Falcon von Gottmar!"

The maiden took up her pitcher, and, gliding over the turf to the margin of the fountain, melted into the overhanging canopy of mist. Again the ominous-looking clouds came between earth and sun, and the moor was as desolate, the silence, only broken by the silvery voice of the enchanted spring, as oppressive as before, and the lord of Gottmar had taken his last look—save one—of the haunt of the maiden of the moor.

* * * * * *

"Give me joy! give me joy, Balthazar!" cried the baron, rushing into the library where, as usual, the

old priest sat. "I am saved; Auriola has accepted the offered atonement, and the ban has passed away! In this casket behold the pledge of our reconciliation! Thanks to you, my father, I can now meet Hildegard at the altar without fear." The venerable chaplain raised his aged hands, trembling with joy, and solemnly blessed his beloved pupil. He saw in his mind's eye many years of happiness for the glad youth kneeling before him; and for the house of Gottmar new honours and a prolonged existence.

## CHAPTER V.

It was the wedding-day of the Baron von Gottmar and the Countess Hildegard; and there were joy and feasting in Teufelsberg Castle. The banqueting-hall was filled with guests. At one end of the table was a mighty boar's head; at the other a gigantic haunch of venison. Great horns were filled with ruby wine and generous old ale; and when Count Benno rose to drink to the health of the happy pair the old rafters rung with the cheers of the guests and the shrill music of trumpet and kettle-drum. Then came the dance, opened by the bride and bridegroom, whose eyes spoke to each other eloquent love.

"And all went merry as a marriage bell."

In the rapid movement of the dance the baron's doublet was accidentally loosened, and the talisman,

flying out, swung between himself and Hildegard.

"See! see!" exclaimed the latter, "what a pretty butterfly! How can it have come here, and at this time of the year, too? Let me catch it!"

"No, no! my Hildegard," said the bridegroom, putting the casket back in its place; "that is no butterfly, and must be touched only by me."

The lady looked surprisedly at her husband and narrowly at the talisman; her eye caught the golden-haired chain.

"Ah! a chain, too!" she cried; "and what beautiful hair! What lady has given thee this keepsake, this chain? And why hast thou never shown it me? Thou lovest another—cruel, unkind Falcon!"

And Hildegard began to sob.

This untoward incident greatly discomposed the baron. He drew his bride into the deep recess of an embayed window, and endeavoured to quieten her.

"Promise, Hildegard, to have confidence in me and repress thy curiosity, and I will on my part promise shortly to explain all."

"Show me, then, what the casket contains, and I will repress my curiosity until—until to-morrow."

"To-morrow be it, then! No! On our journey to my castle shalt thou hear the story of the talisman!"

"Oh! I am unhappy to wait so long!"

"Say not unhappy, my Hildegard, thy happiness is contained in this fairy casket!"

"Let me see it! let me see it!"

Falcon touched a spring and opened the casket. The baroness laughed scornfully.

"So much care and mystery about a drop of water. Not true; I don't believe it; our happiness cannot depend on a drop of water!"

"I will tell thee all on our homeward journey. Come, shall we return to the dance?" said the baron, offering Hildegard his arm.

As they advanced into the room, it appeared to him that the scene he now witnessed was not new to him. The high Gothic hall, the embayed and pointed windows, the musicians, concealed in a curtained niche in the wall, the crowd of dancers, he had surely seen all before? His thoughts went

back to the lone fountain on the solitary moor, and he remembered with a sense of awe and fear that he had now before him the realization of the fourth scene in Auriola's pictures in the air.

"Let us dance and be merry," said he, trying to shake off the uncomfortable feelings that oppressed him, and in the lively strains of music, the gladsome faces of the guests, the congratulations of his friends, and, above all, in the bright eyes of his bride, he quickly forgot everything but his happiness.

Throughout the whole of Upper Lusatia the winter had fairly set in, heavy snowstorms were frequent, travelling had become difficult, and in many cases impossible. Falcon was obliged to defer the taking home of his bride, and he welcomed—as a condemned malefactor welcomes his reprieve—the postponement of the promised confession to his wife; whilst she, full of curiosity and jealous misgivings, regarded the delay of their journey and the satisfaction of her curiosity with a feeling of impatience, fast growing into positive anger. At length the weather moderated, and Falcon, deprived of all excuse for further

delay, was at last obliged to set out with his bride for Gottmar Castle.

For some time after leaving Teufelsberg the two sat silently, side by side, in their carriage; the one, hoping the promised confession would be spontaneously given, the other, that it might never be demanded.

Hildegard was the first to break silence. She begged and pressed Falcon to reveal to her the secret of the casket, and reminded him of his pledged word.

"It is possible, nay probable, dear Hildegard," said the baron, "that the satisfaction of your curiosity may endanger the very existence of both of us. I have promised what I ought not to have promised — the secret will profit thee nothing. Give me back, I pray thee, my rash promise!"

But the baroness would not give him back his word; she claimed its literal fulfilment, and when her husband still hesitated, plied him with every feminine art of which she was mistress. She threatened, coaxed, and wept alternately, until in the end Falcon, though full of fear and misgiving, yielded,

and told the story of the curse of Gottmar and the maiden of the moor.

Both were so absorbed, the one in telling, the other in hearing the strange history, that neither noticed the wild and fast rising storm. Hildegard was full of anger and jealousy—a true daughter of the Church, she was vexed that Falcon had not sought priestly aid to break the curse—she only regarded Balthazar as a sorcerer, and was bitterly jealous of Auriola, whom she looked upon as a beautiful witch, in love with her husband.

"Thank thee for thy confidence!" she said. "I will not betray thy secret. Think not, however, that I will let thee keep that witch's amulet!"

"What!" exclaimed her husband, horrorstruck; "not allow me to retain this casket, this shield against evil?"

"No!" answered the baroness, with flaming eyes. "No unhallowed charms shall come between thee and me to deprive me of thy love—give me the casket!"

"It is impossible, quite impossible," said Falcon.

"Then thou lovest me not! Thy heart is not

mine, it belongs to the wicked witch of the heath; and I love thee not, Falcon—I hate thee!"

As the carriage advanced deeper into the forest, the storm waxed louder and wilder; it howled over the tree-tops, swaying them to and fro, snapping off their huge branches, the crash of whose fall mingled with the rumblings of distant thunder.

"Listen," said the baron, "to the warning voice of heaven! One of its thunderbolts would destroy us were I to grant thy request."

"Say rather, the anger of heaven is kindled against a husband unfaithful in heart, if not in deed, against the dark doings of sorcerers and witches. Oh! my Falcon! throw away that unholy gift; trust for protection against the wiles of the evil one, to the love and prayers of thy true wife—thy own Hildegard."

And she threw herself weeping into her husband's arms. He laid her head gently on his shoulder, and tried, by loving caresses, to soothe and pacify her; he talked to her of the fatal consequences of parting with the casket; she was silent, and seemed to have abandoned the struggle; but, woman-like, she pursued her object, if secretly, yet with unswerving

tenacity. Falcon was thrown off his guard; Hildegard's arm was round his neck. Suddenly she started forward, a glistening object in her hand.

"Hildegard, Hildegard! What hast thou done?"

"Victory! it is mine!" she exclaimed, with a taunting laugh, at the same time throwing the casket into the whirling snow.

A deafening thunder-clap, a blinding flash of lightning, and the great beech-tree before them was on fire. The terrified horses turned round, and rushed off full speed through the forest; the postillions lost all power over them. Faster and faster they went, the carriage rocking from side to side, until they came to a wide heath; and there, by the light of the burning beech, could be seen the white form of Auriola standing by the Goldborn, holding on high Falcon's betrothal ring:—"Woe!" she cried. "Thou hast been to thyself and to me untrue!"

"It is she! Auriola! Auriola! forgive—oh! forgive!"

She let the ring fall like a spray of light into the well, and herself sank slowly, slowly, after it, beckoning with her hand solemnly to Falcon.

"What is that?" called out the baron, as the carriage suddenly stopped.

"Lieber Gott! we are sinking in the moor, my lord!" cried the coachman in a terrified voice. Falcon tore open the door, and sprang hastily on the ground, holding the fainting Hildegard in his arms. But escape was impossible; all round, the moor was going down, down—slime and black mud were oozing and bursting upward. The horses sank deeper and deeper, the top of the carriage afforded only a moment's refuge, and in a few minutes all—horses, carriage, driver, bridegroom and bride had disappeared for ever. The fatal moor closed over them. The race of Gottmar had ceased to exist, and the curse of Wittekend was fulfilled.

# THE LADY OF HELFENSTEIN.

## A LEGEND OF THE ELBE.

NEARLY all the villages on the upper Elbe above Dresden—especially those picturesque ones nestling amongst vineyards and orchards on the right bank of the river—were once, as their names ending in "itz" denote, settlements of the Wends. The ancient race, absorbed by the conquering Teutons, has long since disappeared from this part of Saxony, but traces of its presence still linger in legend and song.

In the deep and narrow defile of Helfenberg, close to the hamlet of Neiderpoyritz, with its vineyards and rose-gardens, is a rocky and precipitous hill, on whose summit, now crowned by thickly-growing trees, are still to be seen the ruins of an old castle,

the castle of Helfenstein, by the Wendish folks called "Barbaricy," or "Woman-robber Castle," an appellation derived from the practice of the lords of the valley of carrying away maidens to their stronghold from the neighbouring villages. Many years ago there lived in this castle a noble knight, Count Hermann von Helfenstein. He was neither rich nor powerful, for his possessions were limited to a few acres of corn and pasture land, sufficient woodland to provide his household with winter fuel, his ancestral halls, and the glen in which they were situated. Count Hermann went to the wars at an early age, where, besides winning for himself honour and renown, he was fortunate enough, by the ransoms of prisoners and other means quite compatible in that age with knightly honour, to increase his scanty hereditary wealth.

He was already about thirty years of age, when at the court of the King of Bohemia, at Prague, he met the Lady Sidonia. She was a dark-haired beauty, with bright black eyes and long drooping eyelashes; her complexion was of a soft peach-like tint, for her home was in the sunny south. Her voice was sweet and low, her manner quiet and

gentle, but she had a brave heart, and with all her gentleness was full of fire and energy. The knight loved her dearly, and when he brought her home to Helfenstein he gave a great feast in her honour to all his tenants and villagers; for Count Hermann had a good heart, and was popular with the poor Wendish peasantry, whom he treated with a kindness and consideration which before his time they had never known.

Now, Count Hermann had a brother, Conrad, a year or two younger than himself, and when their father died, Conrad, finding that his inheritance consisted only of his horse, his armour, and a few gold pieces, had gone into the world to seek his fortune. He travelled and fought in many lands and participated in many doubtful adventures. He served in the far East, he became a rover of the sea, he served in the train of a robber knight on the Rhine; but he did not grow rich withal, and when, after the lapse of many years, he returned to the Elbe country, he lived with a few followers in a moated grange on the Borsberg, and did not disdain, it was said, to lift a purse on the highway or rob a richly-laden craft on the river. But these

deeds were done so cautiously, and at the same time so boldly, that direct proof of them always failed; and Count Conrad was of such a violent and unscrupulous nature, and was so much dreaded as an enemy, that no one dared openly to accuse him; he treated the peasantry and poor people cruelly, and all the country round, from Loschwitz to Pillnitz and Pirna, was greatly hated and feared. His brother alone refused to credit the stories that were told of Conrad's character and doings; he would not believe that the brother, once his inseparable companion, with whom, in old times, he had rambled hand-in-hand through the forest searching for birds' nests, and climbed the steep sides of the valley, looking for nuts and blackberries, who used to boat, and bathe, and fish with him in the Elbe, could now be a robber and a villain. So he asked Conrad to his house and introduced him to his bride, with the appearance of whom the former was greatly taken, and he heartily congratulated his brother on his good fortune, and complimented Sidonia on her good looks. But the admiration was not mutual, and the lady of Helfenstein disliked and mistrusted her brother-in-law from the first moment she saw

him. Certainly Conrad's appearance was not calculated to win either admiration or love. He was a big, broad-shouldered, swash-buckler of a fellow; had long red hair hanging over his shoulders, a red beard, and a red moustache curling fiercely upward; his skin was deeply freckled and sunburnt, and the loss of part of one cheek and an eye-brow from a sword-cut, intensified his naturally savage and sinister aspect. Sidonia could not conceal from her husband the unfavourable impression she had formed of his brother, but Hermann's confidence was not in the least diminished, and he sincerely pitied Conrad's ill luck in being so badly thought of, and attributed his unpopularity to the prejudice arising from his harsh manner and coarse features.

The Count of Helfenstein was not long permitted to enjoy the society of his young wife. His feudal lord summoned him to the field, and the summons was one that he was bound to obey. Sidonia's grief was almost passionate in its intensity when the day arrived that was to separate her from her husband. It was not only that he was going into great danger and she might never see him again; the grief

naturally arising from such a fear was increased tenfold when she thought of her own lonely and desolate position. A foreigner, surrounded by strangers with scarcely one of whom she could exchange a single thought, alone in a gloomy castle in troublous and warlike times, and menaced, perhaps, by unknown and unseen dangers, she looked to the future with fear and trembling. Count Hermann, who was also deeply moved, did his utmost to soothe and console his weeping wife.

"Weep not so bitterly, my Sidonia!" he said. "I hope to be not long absent; the campaign is not likely to be a long one, and I will seize eagerly the first opportunity to return to thee. Herbert, the seneschal, is brave and trusty, and, if occasion arise, will fight for thee to the death; indeed, there is not a man in the castle who would not lay down his life for his beloved mistress. And I have asked Conrad to take heed to thy safety; for my sake he will see that no harm befalls thee, my Sidonia!"

"Oh, Hermann! I love not thy brother, I mistrust and fear him."

"Say not so! though he has an ungainly form and an ill-favoured face, he is my own mother's son,

and would, I believe, pour out for thee and me his very heart's blood."

"I hope so; but my mind misgives me. And must thou really leave me, Hermann—and so soon—scarce three months wed? And we were so happy!" The poor lady accompanied her husband to the ferry over the Elbe, where he and his companions had to cross to the other side, on their journey westward. After a last, fond embrace, they parted, and Sidonia stood with tear-streaming eyes on the river's brink, long after Hermann was lost to sight in the distant forest. And then she walked sadly and slowly up the valley in the direction of Helfenstein. As she passed up the glen she noticed, sitting near an ancient well, the source of whose waters was said to be hidden deep down in the rocks, an old grey-bearded man, of peculiar and striking aspect. He wore the dress of a peasant, but there was in his whole appearance an air of intelligence and superiority that did not fail to attract the attention of the Countess. The stranger respectfully accosted her. "I ask you pardon, noble lady, but will the Lord Count be long absent at the wars?"

"I know not; too long for my peace, I fear! But

why do you ask, old man? you must be a stranger here, your face is unfamiliar to me."

"I ask, noble lady, because there are those who, because you and your husband have dealt kindly with the poor and oppressed, would warn and protect you from danger."

"Warn me against what—what danger, and who are you that can offer me protection?" asked Hildegard, looking with astonishment at the old man.

"I would warn you against those of your own name and house, who mean you ill; watch, or evil will befall! but if it do befall there are powers not far off who can shelter and avenge you. Beware!" repeated the old man, as he disappeared down the narrow path leading to the well.

Sidonia thought much of her conversation with the ancient stranger; his warning made a deep impression on her mind. It evidently pointed to Conrad, and increased the fear and mistrust with which she regarded her brother-in-law. But in what consisted the promised assistance, and who were the mysterious powers on whose behalf the old man had promised to protect and avenge her?

The days flew rapidly by, and Hermann had been gone nearly a month before Conrad paid his sister-in-law a visit; afterwards he came frequently, and was most profuse in his attentions to Sidonia, much to the lady's annoyance, who infinitely preferred the seclusion of her quiet valley to the society of the "red-knight," or "red-robber," as the Wendish people called him. One evening, as she sat pensively in her chamber, her thoughts far away with her absent husband, Conrad entered to her unannounced; his inflamed countenance, and more than usually boisterous manner, showing that his potations had been both long and deep.

"Sidonia," he exclaimed, dropping on one knee before her, "I love you! I can hide my feelings no longer; since the first moment I saw you I have known no peace. Be mine, Sidonia! fly with me from this place, and in your own southern land we—"

For a moment the Countess was too astonished to reply, then she rose from her seat in a whirlwind of indignation, her eyes aflame, all the fire of her Italian nature thoroughly roused.

"Dare you, dare you, Conrad von Helfenstein, make such a proposal to me? Traitor! false brother!

hound! I, leave my husband's home, betray his love, break his true heart for thee! Merciful Heaven! can this treacherous, hideous wretch be my Hermann's brother? Get thee gone, vile traitor, or I swear that I will call my people, and have thee thrown into the moat!"

"Sidonia!"

"Not another word! get thee gone, I say! Herbert! Seneschal!"

"Enough, my lady Countess, I go; but remember! you have insulted a man who was never yet baulked in his revenge. Look to yourself!"

"Look to yourself, Lord Conrad, when your brother returns! Seneschal, show this—show the Count out of the castle and then come to me!"

"Herbert," she said, when, after a few minutes, the old servitor returned, "Count Hermann left the castle and its mistress in your charge, did he not?"

"He did, noble lady, and I am ready to defend both to the death."

"I know it, good Herbert, I know it, and unless I am greatly mistaken your charge is likely ere long to prove no easy one. I always distrusted

Count Conrad, and to-night he has thrown off the mask, betrayed the trust reposed in him by my noble husband, and openly insulted me. I hurled the insult in his teeth and defied him; he has gone away vowing revenge. He is bold and unscrupulous, and will hesitate at nothing to accomplish his object. Use redoubled vigilance in guarding the castle, Herbert; secure well the gate and posterns, set a double watch every night, and turn the wolf-hounds loose in the outer court! If, during the day, you see any strange men-at-arms about, let me know!"

"I will see that all your orders are carried out, my lady. And if I might venture to give you a word of advice, I would urge you never to ramble unattended beyond ear-shot of the castle. People say that Count Conrad has carried off more than one noble lady from her husband ere now."

* * * * * *

Autumn had passed into winter—winter into spring—a second summer was nearly gone; yet still Count Hermann returned not to Helfenstein; but a wandering minstrel had brought Sidonia news of her dear knight, and she hoped, ere the fast-flowing Elbe

was locked in the icy embrace of another winter, to cast away all her cares, and forget all her sorrows, in the arms of her beloved hero.

Conrad, contrary to her expectations, had offered her no molestation; she had never seen him since the hateful day on which he had confessed his dishonourable love. For many months the moated grange on the Borsberg had been deserted, and it was rumoured that its owner had left the country for good. But the Countess neither forgot her fears nor abandoned her precautions, for to them only did she attribute her hitherto immunity from outrage, for she believed not that her savage brother-in-law would lightly forego his threatened revenge. Herbert, the seneschal, did not share in his lady's continued misgivings; he was fully persuaded that Conrad had departed for some distant land, and was so full of confidence that he did not always, as formerly, strictly carry out the regulations for the watching and guarding of the castle.

One evening, as the last rays of the setting sun filled the glen with a rosy light, two pilgrims wended their way up the steep and narrow path that leads from Niederpoyritz to Helfenstein. An old man,

with a long grey beard, sat by the wayside, and as the pilgrims passed by he respectfully saluted them.

"I bid you good even, my lord pilgrims; bring you news of our good Count Hermann? Or," he added, scanning the men narrowly, "perhaps you can tell us of the welfare of his brother, the Count Conrad?"

"The foul fiend seize you! Dog of a peasant, what mean you!" and the taller of the pilgrims lifted his staff, as if to strike the old man, but there was a nameless something in the aspect and bearing of the latter, as he stood up and rose to his full height, that arrested his assailant's arm.

"The curse of Radegast be upon you, false pilgrim, for daring to raise your hand against one of his people!" said the old peasant, as he took the path to the spring. The pilgrims seemed considerably disconcerted. "What means the rogue by the curse of Radegast?" asked the younger of the two of his companion.

"Radegast was one of the gods of the Wends, and people say that in old times he used to be worshipped in this valley. The old grey-beard spoke strangely.

I hope none of our people have betrayed us! But no! that is impossible; let us hasten on!"

Helfenstein Castle was the destination of the pilgrims, and they were very warmly, and even greedily welcomed, by Herbert and his fellow-servitors. Such visitors were rare in the valley, and eagerly were they questioned as to what was going on in the world. They were last from Prague, they explained, and were returning from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, to their home in Thuringia. The younger of the two was the chief spokesman; his comrade, he said, was footsore and ailing, and on this ground, and pleading also his own fatigue, he excused himself from seeing the lady of the castle until the next morning.

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Sidonia sat in her turret chamber, working by the light of a lamp, at her embroidery-frame. A huge wolf-hound couched at her side, and ever and anon she paused to listen to the rising wind, or to think more intently of her absent lord. Once she laid down her work, went to the casement and looked into the night. It was dark, though the heavens were cloudless, and she could scarcely distinguish the trees

on the rocky side of the valley opposite to her. As she was about to close the window, a stone, that appeared to come from the depths of the glen below, fell almost into her hand; round the stone was fastened a small piece of parchment. Sidonia, startled, and almost alarmed, eagerly unfolded the parchment and found inscribed on it the words—

"Lady, beware! danger is near!"

For many minutes the Countess stood earnestly scrutinizing the parchment, utterly unable to conjecture what it could portend, or from what quarter the danger, against which she was warned, might come. Conrad was away, she knew no other enemy. She summoned her seneschal.

"Has Count Conrad yet returned to the moated grange, Herbert?" she asked.

"No, my lady! nor do I think he is likely to return. Two pilgrims, on their way from the holy sepulchre, are now in the castle, and they say that Count Conrad is at Prague, and that he has taken service with the King of Bohemia."

"Two pilgrims! and why were they not brought to me? Bring they news of Lord Hermann?" added Sidonia anxiously.

"They are footsore and ailing, and beg to be excused waiting on your ladyship, until morning. I have asked them concerning my lord, but they can tell naught of him."

"Be sure to let me have speech of these men before they depart, and see to the guarding of the castle as usual, good Herbert!"

The seneschal took his leave, and Sidonia sank down on her seat. The more she thought about the mysterious warning, the more inscrutable did it seem. What could it portend? was it in any way connected with the warning the old peasant had given her in the glen? But how had the message reached her? The castle stood on a precipitous eminence, from the foot of which, even by daylight, no mortal hand could throw a stone into the inaccessible window of her chamber. And then she remembered sagas of spirits and nixies, said to dwell in the valleys of the Elbe, and that her husband had once told her that in his father's time the great well was haunted. These thoughts kept her awake until far into the night, and she was only at last roused from her reveries by a sudden and savage growl from the wolf-hound at her feet.

SIDONIA AND HER DOG LION.

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"What is it, Lion, what is it!" she said encouragingly.

The dog stood up, his whole attitude denoting the most intense excitement and attention, then with another savage growl he bounded fiercely against the door. "Down, Lion! be quiet!" and she opened the door and listened intently, still retaining the hound by her side. For some minutes she could not distinguish a single sound, all was still. Then a violent crash was heard, followed by the sound of trampling feet, the deep baying of the chained wolf-hounds, the clash of swords, the oaths and shouts of fierce combat. Sidonia, taking in one hand a long dagger, and holding in the other the lamp, her faithful Lion by her side, hastened forward in the direction of the tumult. As she descended the flight of stairs leading to the banqueting-hall, she encountered Herbert the seneschal, sword in hand, bleeding profusely from a deep wound in his neck.

"Save yourself, save yourself, my dear lady!" he cried. "The pilgrims were Count Conrad and a companion as wicked as himself; one occupied the attention of the guard, whilst the other, undetected,

treacherously opened the gate to their followers without. Hans, Siegfried, and Dietrich are slain. I fought my way through, and come, if it be possible, to save you, if not, at least to die for you. I have barred the big oaken doors behind me, and they will not be easily forced."

But the seneschal was mistaken. As he spoke a ponderous beam, urged by a score of stalwart hands, dashed open the massive doors, and at least twenty men-at-arms swarmed into the room.

"Seize the Countess Sidonia, and bring her to the gate!" commanded the harsh voice of Conrad.

"Now, Lion, now!" said Sidonia to her dumb companion. The hound flew at the foremost trooper's throat and pinned him to the ground; the second was struck down by the old seneschal, and when the others attempted to lay hands on her, the Countess defended herself vigorously with her dagger. But all was of no avail. The faithful hound was pierced through and through with sword and spear; Herbert, overpowered by numbers, was borne lifeless to the ground; the weapon of Sidonia dashed harmlessly against the mailed breasts of the men-at-arms, and she was seized and forcibly led to

her brother-in-law, who waited in the outer court.

"Now, my lady!" he said, "what think you? have I kept my word? will you again insult me, and trample scornfully on my proffered love? Oh, I will have a sweet revenge!"

Sidonia drew herself to her full height, and looked scornfully and indignantly at the traitor, but did not deign to answer him even by so much as a single word.

"Mount!" called out Conrad to his men, "bring hither my horse—we must away."

His horse was brought, and the Count, placing the unfortunate Sidonia, who had almost abandoned herself to despair, on the saddle before him, hurried down the ravine. As they came opposite the well, a sudden gleam of light startled the horse, causing his rider to slightly relax his hold of the almost fainting Countess. Revived by the chance of escape this incident seemed to afford, Sidonia made a great effort, sprang from her captor's arms, and, alighting on her feet, darted rapidly down the rugged path to the well; then, commending her soul to heaven, she plunged into its deep waters.

"Curse the slippery witch! But I'll be even with her yet," said Conrad, hastily dismounting. "What ho there! torches and a rope—quick, men! Torches and a rope, I say!"

These were soon produced, and the Count and his men descended to the spring. A long drought had so reduced the water that its level was far below the opening of the well, and the lights held over it revealed nothing but profound darkness. So the Count ordered one of the troopers—Hans Schneider, a big Bavarian, to fasten himself to the rope, and then directed the man's comrades to lower him down gently to the edge of the water—told Hans to take a torch with him, and that he must find and bring back the Countess, alive or dead. The weight of the Bavarian was so great that the order to "lower gently" was not easy of execution, the unfortunate trooper went down "with a run," and before he could call "hold," was sent ever so many feet under water. It was only by the extinguishing of his torch that the men at the mouth of the well discovered what had happened, and began to haul upwards. When Hans emerged from his involuntary bath, he swore and spluttered at a terrible rate.

No sooner had he got the water out of his eyes and mouth than there rained upon his head and shoulders from, as it appeared to him, every part of the well, a perfect shower of cuffs and blows, and he was pricked and pinched by unseen hands in every part of his body. He could not help himself in the least, for he was obliged to hold on to the rope like grim death; he roared and bellowed like a bull, and shouted to his comrades in the name of the Holy Virgin to haul him up quickly, or he would be a dead man.

When Hans Schneider arrived on firm ground he was in a piteous plight. He streamed with water, alternately shivered with cold and trembled with fear, and his face, over which his long black hair hung in damp disorder, was as pale as death, except its principal feature—his nose, which Hans had occupied himself many years in dyeing a fast red.

"What have you seen down there, you cowardly vagabond, and what have you been howling about?" asked Conrad in a rage, shaking his fist in the poor wretch's face.

"Seen! howling!" answered the indignant

Schneider. "How could I see anything when those fools let the rope slip and nearly drowned me? I never swallowed so much water in all my life before, and the water down there is cold, infernally cold! No sooner had I recovered my breath than I was thrashed as with a hundred cudgels—until I believe I have not a sound spot left in all my body—and pinched, and pricked, till I verily thought I was turned into the devil's own pincushion! Holy Virgin! how sore I am! Howl! donner und blitzen! who wouldn't have howled?"

"And you have not found the Lady Sidonia, then, idiot?" inquired the Count, who boiling over with baffled rage, had paid scarcely any attention to the man's story.

"I saw nobody, living or dead!" said Hans sullenly.

"Now will I descend into the well myself," exclaimed Conrad. "I am not to be thus lightly foiled; of one part of my revenge will I at least be certain. Men! six of you take your torches and fire the castle. Quick! but mind, fire it thoroughly!"

Conrad fixing his foot, stirrup-like, firmly in a loop of the rope, told his men to lower him quietly

and slowly into the well. He strongly suspected that Sidonia had found a hiding-place in some cave or cleft of the rock, and he was determined to examine the sides of the well with the utmost care; but he found his task a difficult and bootless one, and reached the surface of the water without having discovered the least trace of the object of his search. Holding his torch over his head, he looked long and earnestly into the crystal spring, but found there no Sidonia, and was just about to call to his men to draw him up, when, lo! he perceived in the water beneath him pictures, as clear and distinct as a reflection in a mirror—scenes from his past life. A town taken by storm—men fighting, demon-like, in streets, in churches, under the eaves of houses—women fleeing, shrieking, from brutal soldiers—lurid fires flaming up into the reddened sky. A soldier enters a stately mansion, seizes its venerable owner by the throat, and demands—money. The old man pleads that his house has been already sacked, and his gold taken, and begs, but in vain, for mercy. Another moment, and his white locks are dyed in his life's blood. Two men are walking through a forest—they are comrades, friends; but

the one has gold, the other has none. They are weary, and lay down to rest and sleep under the spreading branches of an ancient oak. But only one of the wayfarers sleeps—sleeps soundly, tranquilly. The other opens his eyes, raises himself on his elbow, looks carefully around, and then, drawing a long, bright dagger from his breast, plunges it into his friend's heart, and possessing himself of the coveted wealth, flees into the recesses of the wood.

The time is night—black clouds drift between earth and a humid and sickly moon. A barge is descending the Elbe—on one side are high rocks and fir-clad precipices, on the other dark forest. A boat full of armed men puts off from the shore—a lazy watch is kept on the barge, and the pirates board her without opposition; the steersman is cut down, and as the scanty and surprised crew come on deck, each one of them is murdered, and his body cast into the flowing river. Then the barge is rifled, and the pirates, rapidly rowing to the opposite bank, are speedily lost to sight in its rocky fastnesses.

Conrad was speechless with horror; his teeth chattered with fear, heavy drops of perspiration

stood on his brow, and when he saw yet another scene—the heavy and bloated corpse of a man—that man himself suspended in the water, his hold on the rope relaxed, and with a terrible cry he fell headlong into the deep waters of the well.

When the troopers above heard the cry, and felt that their leader had gone—whether into the water or carried off by some evil spirit, they knew not—they fled in terror from the place, and mounting their horses in hot haste, made off with all speed. As the last trooper disappeared down the glen, vivid flames shot into the darkness from the windows and loopholes of Helfenstein Castle.

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Scarcely, next morning, had the sun appeared above the Bohemian hills, when a number of horsemen, crossing the Elbe at Pillnitz, rode rapidly down the right bank of the river, in the direction of Niederpoyritz. One of them, more eager than the rest, outstripped his companions, and putting his horse to speed, galloped swiftly up the ravine of Helfenberg. When he came within sight of the blackened, and still smoking, ruins of the castle, he

pulled up his horse, stopping as suddenly as if he had been turned into stone.

"My God! What is this?" said Hermann von Helfenstein.

A deep groan proceeded from the thick underwood by the way side. The Count, dismounting, sought out the spot whence the dismal sound proceeded, and found his faithful seneschal, Herbert, covered with wounds, faint, and almost dying. The old servitor told his sad story, and how, though left for dead by Conrad's troopers, he still retained enough life to crawl from the burning castle, and hide himself where his master had discovered him. Of Sidonia he could give no account, except that she had been carried off by Conrad, or his men. Hermann was overwhelmed, dazed, stupefied; he refused to believe his own eyes, his own ears.

"I cannot, cannot believe it!" he said. "And yet it must be true; you would not lie to me, good Herbert. And there, before me, is my ruined home! And Conrad, my brother Conrad, has done this, you say? Oh, it is impossible. I loved him, Herbert! His mother was my mother, we had the same father, we used to sleep in one bed with our

arms round each other's necks, and sport hand in hand in this very valley. I clung to him and loved him still, when all others hated him. And now, now, he has destroyed our old home, slaughtered my faithful servants, and, cruellest of all, robbed me of my wife, my Sidonia! Life is no more for me!"

Hermann covered his face, and groaned aloud. When after a few minutes he looked up, his countenance was pale and stern, and a fierce light glittered in his dark eyes. He turned and addressed his companions, who had by this time overtaken him.

"Gentlemen, I promised you warm welcome and good cheer at Helfenstein. I can now offer you only blackened walls and smoking rafters! A foul and treacherous deed has been committed. The Countess, my wife, has been carried off by a wretch who was, but is no longer, my brother. I must either rescue or avenge her. What say you, sirs? will you be my helpers in this?" All eagerly assented, and expressed their readiness to follow Hermann to the death.

"To horse, then, my friends!" he exclaimed.

"We must at once to the moated grange on the Borsberg!"

"Stay!" said a deep voice in his ear. "Thy wife is in safety, and Count Conrad is not at the moated grange."

Hermann turned in astonishment—he found himself confronted by an aged peasant, with a long grey beard.

"Thy wife is in safety," repeated the latter; "follow me!"

There was that in the old man's manner which commanded confidence, and signing to his companions to await his return, the Count followed him across the valley. His guide led him, by a narrow and little frequented path, to an opening in the rocks, the entrance to a short and narrow cavern, overhung, and concealed from view, by trees and brushwood.

Inside the cavern, sleeping peacefully on a couch of leaves and fir branches, lay—Sidonia! The old man, stooping down, touched her gently on the forehead; she opened her eyes, and gazed wonderingly around. The next moment her eye caught that of her husband.

"Hermann!"

"Sidonia!"

And they were clasped in a loving embrace.

Then they asked each other the same question—"How came you here?" Her story was soon told. She remembered plunging into the well, feeling that death itself was preferable to the tender mercies of Conrad, and she remembered little more. There was a vague recollection of a vaulted chamber, a soft couch, the careful tending of two beautiful maidens, and the kind attentions of a stately and strangely attired old man, floating through her mind; but whether it was a dream or a reality who could tell?

"Oh! tell me if you can," said Sidonia to the old man, "how I was saved, and whom I must thank for my preservation from death, or worse than death."

"Seek not to know, lady. But if you would show your gratitude, continue, as you have hitherto done, to deal tenderly with the Wendish people. I told you, my lord Count, that your brother was not at the moated grange on the Borsberg. If you would find him, search in yonder well where the Countess Sidonia so narrowly escaped death."

And before the surprised Hermann could reply, the mysterious old man had disappeared. Ropes were procured, the well dragged, and Christian burial given to the body of Conrad von Helfenstein.

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During the winter Hermann and Sidonia, so happily and wonderfully restored to each other, found shelter at Pirna, near which place the Emperor had made the Count a grant of land in consideration of his services in the war. When the bright spring weather came round again they paid a visit to the valley of Helfenberg, and, as they walked hand in hand up the path they knew so well, they talked over their plans for the restoration of their old home. As they talked they were silently joined by the old peasant. "Restore it not, restore it not!" he said. "The place is unlucky; let the ruin ever remain a ruin, in memory of a wife's devotion and a brother's crime!"

Hermann and Sidonia took the advice of their mysterious friend, and the Castle of Helfenstein remains a ruin to this day.

## THE PRIEST, THE FAIRY, AND DOCTOR HORN.

A MOTHER sat in her cottage, watching with tender and anxious eyes the cradle of her month-old babe; the rays of the setting sun filled the little room with soft and golden glow, and shone like an aureole round the child's brows. As the mother watched, she prayed. Four other children whom she had borne had one after the other drooped and died, and now she besought the Holy Virgin that this, her only one, might be spared to her, and she vowed if her prayer were heard to bring him up in the fear of God, and that his life should be devoted to the church. "Thou, who hast thyself a son," she said, "who hast felt a mother's pain and a mother's

love, forgive my importunity and pity my weakness, and if this poor child should not have strength and constancy to withstand the temptations of the world, and the wiles of the evil one, send to him, I beseech thee, a guardian angel to guide, protect, and comfort him!"

The little Albrecht smiled in his sleep as the trembling mother finished her humble, unambitious prayer. In the cottage all was still; outside, the only sounds were the sweet music of the mill-stream, and the drowsy hum of the old mill. The setting sun crowned the distant hills with crimson glory, filling the deep valleys for a moment with rosy laughter; and as Gertrude gazed with awe and wonder on the scene she became conscious that a shape—a being not of this world—was near her. Gradually the apparition grew more distinct; and there stood before her in the gloaming, the most beautiful creature her eyes had ever seen. The face of this unearthly visitant was all innocence and purity, her eyes all love; round a robe that sparkled like sun-lit sea foam, was clasped a broad girdle of gold, studded with lustrous pearls; a veil, fine as spider's web, floated over her shoulders, and masses of

golden brown hair clustered over a noble god-like brow.

"Holy Virgin! who art thou?" cried Gertrude, terrified, and trembling in every limb.

"Not an evil being, dear Gertrude! I come to tell thee that thy prayer has been heard, that thy petition will be granted."

"Art thou an angel?" and Gertrude knelt on the cottage floor.

"Consider me one, if thou wilt, and take heed of what I am about to tell thee," answered the mysterious stranger in a voice sweet as the nightingale's song. "Thy son will live, and that which thou hast vowed for him must be done, or great evil will befall thee and him. He belongs to heaven and holy church, and thine the task to train him for his high vocation. Thy fears are not groundless, he will be exposed to great dangers and temptations. Receive this talisman!—during thy son's future life it will guard him from harm—in thy motherly care I place it, and when thy boy is old enough to take upon himself priestly vows, place it in his hands; explain to him its source and its value; and tell him that so long as the talisman is his, so long will he

be kept in the path of religion and virtue and made strong to withstand the world, the flesh, and the devil. And now fare thee well, Gertrude, be happy, doubt not, and never regret that thou has devoted to heaven and its service that which is dearest to thee on earth!"

With these words the "angel" presented the talisman to Gertrude, who, as she took it, pressed the hand of her mysterious visitor to her lips, but shrunk in dismay from its icy coldness. Then the radiant stranger melted slowly from view, a fleecy vapour floated through the open window, hovered for a moment over the water lilies in the mill-stream, and sunk beneath its waters.

Gertrude looked at the talisman. It had the appearance of a tiny locket of lapis-lazuli, with silver clasps and a silver back; on its front was the representation of a spring, surrounded by willows and groups of the silvery birch, and at each corner was depicted a water lily. In the spring, Gertrude recognized a spot well known in the neighbourhood; it was famous for the purity, clearness, and abundance of its water, water that even in the hottest and driest of summers was never known to

fail or diminish. And because of certain strange and phantom-like figures, that often, on moonlight nights, were seen hovering about it, the place had received the name of Fairy's Well. After a careful examination of the locket, she essayed to open it, but the attempt was fruitless; the clasps were as firm and unyielding as iron; and full of wonder, not unmixed with doubt, she placed the strange gift carefully in the chest that contained her most cherished possessions—her wedding dress, her marriage lines, memorials of the four little ones whom she had lost. Then again sitting down by the cradle she looked long and lovingly at the still slumbering babe, until lulled by the monotonous clack of the mill-wheel and the soft murmuring of the brook, she herself sunk into a deep and dreamless slumber.

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Years rolled on. Gertrude was now a widow, her husband the miller had died, leaving to her the mill and the cottage. She carried on the business with the help of a manager, her honesty and gentleness won for her general esteem, and the mill had more custom than ever. Albrecht was a well-grown lad,

industrious at school and energetic at play, he was full of love for his mother, and showed not the least reluctance to adopt the profession for which she destined him. His chief happiness consisted in rambling about the hills and valleys that surrounded his home; many of these were said to be haunted, but the lad was of a fearless disposition, and he cared little for the frequent stories he heard of nixy, kobald, and elf. The most prominent frequenter of the country side, of the hobgoblin sort, was a certain Doctor Horn, and a very curious character he was. Many theories as to his precise nature were current. Some said he had been a schoolmaster, and was suffering the punishment due to the cruelties he had inflicted on his pupils, others that he was a priest who had broken his vows, others again that he was a philosopher who had meddled with forbidden arts and tried to be learned beyond what was written. But most people thought he was the devil himself, who walked about partly for his own pleasure, and partly with the object of entrapping any poor mortal who might be stupid or unwary enough to listen to his specious talk. The habits, the appearance, and the costume of Doctor

Horn were equally remarkable. He was the very opposite of an ordinary ghost; the time he most liked to show himself was in the middle of the day, he particularly affected hot, shiny weather, and was oftenest seen on the side of a hill, in the neighbourhood of a footpath, that came thereby to be called "Doctor Horn's walk." He was never known to wear a hat. A thatch of thick raven-black hair, through which projected a pair of stumpy horns, covered his head; his eyes were green, and his face expressed a strange combination of devilry, cynicism, and sardonic humour. He wore a black roundabout jacket, from the collar of which hung behind him a thick golden tassel; his nether limbs were encased in thick crimson breeches, and he wore one yellow top-boot. Only one, because his right leg was short by the knee, and from its stump protruded a very lively-looking adder, which after taking a couple of turns by way of garter round the perfect leg, carried its head to the level of the waistband of its master's breeches, and by its shrill hissing always heralded his approach. In his right hand the Doctor carried a long alpenstock, on the top of which he had placed as ornament, a skull, that never

for a moment intermitted the smoking of a long cigar —a cigar that always remained "in," and never grew less.

Though Albrecht had often heard of this eccentric being, he did not meet him until he was nearly sixteen years old. One bright summer morning, there being no school that day, he set off for a long walk. After crossing the valley, through which winds the foaming Mandau, he leisurely mounted the opposite hill, for the sun was hot and the path steep. All at once he heard the hissing of a snake, and, turning round, saw before him the famous Doctor Horn. Tho doctor particularly prided himself on his politeness, and liked to make his greetings in the language of diplomacy and courts.

"Bonjour, monsieur!" he said, seizing with his left hand his black hair, and raising his head clean off his shoulders, at the same time gracefully inclining his body. "A nice warm day; beautifully fine for a walk!"

Now Albrecht had heard so many stories about Doctor Horn, had so often expected to meet him, and was naturally of so bold a spirit that the encounter neither greatly surprised nor frightened

him, and though the doctor's method of salutation was certainly rather startling, the lad stood his ground and answered without hesitation.

"Well, it is rather warm, and I am sure you must feel very hot and uncomfortable with that black jacket, those thick breeches, and your big boot. I know I should be. And are you not tired walking over the hills with one leg?"

"And so I don't frighten you, my boy! Good! I like that! Most people, lads especially, run when they see me; run, ah! ah! as if the devil were after them. Poor devil! he is a very convenient scapegoat for men to lay their sins on; plenty of fish come into his net though, without invitations even. The fools fancy I want to entangle them in their talk; not very difficult, I should think, considering the very little wit many of them are blessed with. And you think I am likely to be hot and tired? Well, I can stand heat; I am used to it, and, in fact, rather like it. When I begin to feel tired, I lay down and rest, or mount my horse and have a gallop of a hundred miles or so."

"Your horse!" interrupted Albrecht, who was himself very fond of a ride; "what sort of one is

he, and where do you keep him? Is he black—like —like—"

"Don't hesitate; out with it! Like me? Yes; I am rather dark-complexioned, but I don't like a black horse for all that; I never saw a real good one of that colour. No; my favourite steed is a magnificent 'flea-bitten' grey. I fetched him myself from the stables of the Prophet at Mecca. I can see you are fond of horses; you should see Starlight; to look at him is joy, to ride him is ecstasy. One of these nights you shall go a-hunting with us, and then—"

"Hunting at night! how can you hunt in the dark?" interrupted the boy.

"The best time, Albrecht; the best time. It's far better fun, far wilder sport, than hunting by day."

"But how do you stick on?"

"The easiest thing in the world. My little wife" —here he pointed to the snake—"twists herself round both my legs and Starlight's body, and as he never stops at anything, never stumbles or falls, we go like the wind, over hedge and ditch, river and moor, and the darker the night the better.

There is not half the excitement when you see everything before you. But I forget; all this is nothing to you, Albrecht; you are destined to wear, not the scarlet coat of the huntsman, but the black frock of the priest."

"Yes; I am going into the church."

"Don't you think you are making a mistake, my boy? There is more in the world than you have ever dreamed of, pleasures and glories of whose very existence you are ignorant. The fierce excitement of war, the intoxicating smiles of beauty, ambition, fame, sunny lands, and enchanted seas; all these you are casting away. But you are a brave lad, and if ever you want anything, or desire to throw off the heavy burden that mother church may one day impose upon you, come to me."

"How shall I find you? Are you always about here?" asked Albrecht.

"You must give the call. Come, little woman, teach him the call."

The snake gave a loud and prolonged hiss, which Albrecht had no difficulty in imitating.

"Good! now let me to persuade you to abandon this notion of entering the church; let your youth

have its fling; say to your mother that you have changed your mind."

"God forbid!" said Albrecht, hastily pulling from his bosom and kissing the crucifix, which he was never without. "It would break her heart."

At the words "God forbid," and the sight of the crucifix, the snake hissed venomously, the doctor turned hurriedly away, and fleeing precipitately down the mountain, vanished among the trees of the forest.

Albrecht returned slowly and thoughtfully to the mill, pondering deeply over his adventure, wondering much who Doctor Horn could be, and what that world was of which he was so ignorant. But he told no one, not even his mother, what had happened to him, and as the time had arrived when he must read and study very earnestly, the recollection of the interview gradually faded from his mind, and became at last as vague and shadowy as a dream.

He took his vows, and on the same day his mother gave him the talisman, told him its use, and how and when she had received it. Then the overjoyed Gertrude, deeply thankful that the great

object of her life was accomplished, solemnly blessed her son; for her health was failing, and she knew that her days were not long.

Albrecht received the appointment of chaplain in a small isolated village, not far from the mill, but before he was installed in his new office, his dear mother died; so the business had to be given up, the mill sold, and the young priest was left alone in the world, without one relative, and with scarcely a single friend. He felt very lonely, his charge was a small one, and consisted exclusively of ignorant peasants, with whom he had no ideas in common, and the restrictions of his position weighed heavily upon him. It seemed only the other day that he was a schoolboy, ranging the hills as free as a wild colt, and now he was fenced in between the narrow boundaries of decorum and propriety. He must be a pattern to his people, an example to the world; all his proceedings were criticized, his every action watched and commented on. And he was shut out from the enjoyments of his age; no young man chose him as companion, no girl mocked him with merry glances, nay, even when he met in his walks a happy band of youths and maidens, all laughter

was hushed, and as they passed by and reverently saluted the priest every face put on an aspect of gravity. When he looked in his mirror, he almost cursed his black frock, his hideous cap, and his smooth shaven face.

He sought to pacify his perturbed spirit by a more devoted attention to his religious duties and ghostly functions. He prayed, he read day and night the lives of the Fathers and histories of saints and holy martyrs; but these well-meant efforts were all in vain, his unrest increased, the agitation of his mind became almost uncontrollable. He thought of Doctor Horn, of his promises of help, and of his description of the careers he had renounced; and so intense was the feeling of despair that filled his soul that he was on the point of seeking out that strange, and possibly evil being, when he suddenly remembered the talisman, the gift of his beloved mother. Until that moment her death and subsequent events had driven recollection of it from his memory. He took the locket from the chest in which, on receiving it from his mother, he had carefully placed it. To his great surprise he found, faintly but legibly inscribed on the back of the talisman, words that he

had assuredly never before seen, and of which his mother had made no mention to him. They ran thus:—

> "Wouldst my hidden secret know?
> Then to the fairy fountain go!
> At the witching hour of night,
> Ope me by the pale moonlight!"

When he had read, he placed the mysterious little thing to his lips—the effect was magical. He felt soothed and comforted, a sense of perfect peace dwelt in his soul, his heart ceased its rebellious beatings, his flushed face resumed its wonted expression; and he devoutly thanked heaven for so great a mercy. Two nights hence the moon would shine at the midnight hour, and Albrecht determined to visit the fairy's well, and unravel the mystery of the talisman.

In the meantime he could scarcely restrain his impatience and curiosity, otherwise he was calm, happy, and even joyful. At the stroke of eleven he started on his journey, the locket securely fastened round his neck, and placed on his heart.

He had an hour's good walking before him, and



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his way led him through the valley, and along the foot of the hill on which many years before he had met Doctor Horn. As the young priest strode rapidly forward, picking his way by the light of the now almost full moon, an unusual, but not altogether unfamiliar, sound fell on his ear—the loud hissing of a snake—and the next instant he saw on the slope above him the well-remembered figure of the doctor himself, and heard his harsh voice.

"Hallo! Whither away so fast, Mr. Chaplain? Won't you stop and speak to an old friend? Why did you not come to me a couple of days since? I know you thought of me. You would have been quite welcome to any poor assistance I could render. Come with me now, and you shall see Starlight! To-morrow night we shall have a glorious chase; join us, and you shall have the best mount mortal man ever rode. You won't? Oh! you prefer to get your death of cold sitting by the well yonder, and embracing, perhaps, a damp fairy. Well, there's no accounting for tastes, you know, and—"

But Albrecht heard no more. He gathered his

THE PRIEST AND MAIDEN OF THE WELL.

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skirts about him, and rushed towards the fountain. The "Fairy's Well" had its source high up in the mountain, whence a small subterranean stream, descending into the valley with considerable velocity, had hollowed out a cavernous space, and this, overhung with rocks, half concealed by trees, and festooned with ivy and honeysuckle, formed the fountain. Before it was a small, almost circular meadow, kept ever fresh and green by the rill of crystal water that bubbled constantly from the well. The meadow was encircled, and nearly hidden, by a thick belt of willows and silver birch trees, and in front of the well two noble old beeches formed a natural harbour. In this sequestered grove, and on the border of the fountain, Albrecht seated himself. Taking out his talisman he held it in the rays of the refulgent moon, and as the yellow sheen illumined the lapis-lazuli and burnished silver, of which it was composed, the locket opened in his hand. Inside was a minute but beautiful water lily; it expanded as the priest gazed, and its petals quivered in the moonbeams. The lilies in the fountain swayed to and fro; and there slowly floated upward from the water a maiden form of wondrous

beauty. Her face was pale and rather mournful, but the dark and liquid eyes were full of tenderness and love. Wild flowers were twined in her black hair, her graceful and flowing figure was enveloped in a cloud of the finest gauze, her hands and arms were bare, and on her tiny feet she wore slippers of coral, set with amethysts and pearls.

Albrecht was so astonished at this apparition that until she addressed him, in the sweetest of silvery voices, he could neither speak nor move; then, moved by an uncontrollable impulse, he seized her in his arms, embraced her, and seated her near him on the edge of the fountain.

"Who art thou, strange being?" he said, "and why dost thou lead me into temptation?"

"Thou art mistaken, Albrecht! I lead thee from, not into, temptation. I will keep thee from evil. I am thy guardian spirit, thy good angel, and thy beloved. So long as thou art here, so long as the talisman is thine, I belong to thee. I am neither a mortal, as thou art, nor a ghost, as some are, but a nymph, a fairy; and if thou wilt believe in me, and be true to me, I can watch over and protect thee. I can chase away thy evil thoughts, and make thy life tranquil

and happy. This function once fulfilled, my mission on earth will be at an end, and I may join the spirits of my people who are amongst the blest."

"I thank thee for thy love and thy aid, beautiful nymph. But by what name shall I know thee, and think of thee?"

"By the one that best pleases thee."

"Nay! it is not for me to bestow a name on my good angel."

"Well, then, as I am so fond of the moon, and can only meet thee when he lights this corner of the earth, and as my power always waxes and wanes as he waxes and wanes, call me Luna!"

"A sweet name! I shall remember it in my prayers. Ah! Luna, thou has done well to choose a priest for thy mortal lover. I am sealed to the church; no earthly love, no daughter of man, no wife or child can come between thee and me. And thy love, pure and elevating, free from human dross, will strengthen me to conquer my own weakness and for the performance of my spiritual duties."

"True, my Albrecht! but thou must know that though my heart, and such love as it is permitted for nymph to have for mortal, are thine, my power

and my influence are limited, so that there are times and seasons when thou must rely on thy own strength. In dark and stormy weather, when the ruler of night hides his face from the earth, my power, but not my love, sinks almost into nothingness. Then, Albrecht, must thou watch and pray, for evil beings will seek to destroy thy soul."

"Who are these evil beings, Luna, and why are they provoked against me?"

"Mainly because thou hast the love of the blessed Virgin, and art under the protection of our fairy world. That thou art a priest is nothing, there are thousands of priests who seek, rather than avoid temptation, and the father of lies has amongst them some of his choicest spirits. But the destruction of one chosen of Mary, loved and guarded by Luna, would be indeed a triumph for the nether world; and its denizens will only cease their plottings with thy earthly life. Yet fear not, dear Albrecht, thy soul shall never be theirs. But never forget! if thou shouldst ever distrust my love or doubt my power, thy danger will be great."

And then the beautiful nymph gave Albrecht high and noble counsel—pointed out to him the unreason

of his mental rebellion against his holy calling—reminded him of the enormous power for good or evil wielded by priestly hands, and by the church whose servant and soldier he was. She told him how, by study and thought, he might some day rise high in the ranks of the church's hierarchy, and how much more subtle, far-reaching, and durable, was their influence who direct the faith and modify the belief of mankind than that of soldiers and statesmen who control only brute strength and command outward obedience.

In this strain she talked on hour after hour, her lovely head cushioned on Albrecht's shoulder, her sweet and intellectual face turned upward towards the paling moon. Silence followed, a sense of exquisite lanquor fell over Albrecht, and just as the young god of the morning lifted his glorious crest above the orient hills, he felt Luna melt from his arms, a silvery cloud hung over the well and disappeared amongst the lilies, and the priest was alone with the gentle soughing of the balmy breeze and the music of running water.

During the whole of the summer and autumn Albrecht continued his nocturnal visits to the Fairy's

Well, and his sweet communings with Luna, whose influence over him was all for good. He became more useful and active amongst his people, visited the sick more assiduously, comforted the afflicted, and succoured out of his sufficient, though modest, means, the widow and the fatherless. This work added to his happiness, as well as to his popularity with his parishioners, and increased the respect in which they held him. He studied too, and when he could not find on his own shelves, or those of his neighbours, the books he required, he made journeys to Dresden or to Meissen, where he generally succeeded in buying or borrowing the books he wanted.

This sort of life went on until winter, when his meetings with Luna became gradually fewer, and their duration shorter, and before the nights had reached their greatest length, the nymph had ceased to answer to his call, and came no more to the fairy fountain. His spirit was again perturbed, his mind full of unrest, and when he thought of Luna's warning, his soul was overwhelmed with despair; for he feared that his good angel had been overcome by the evil beings who sought his destruction, and that he was left to his fate.

One night, filled with despondent and uneasy thoughts, and too impatient to wait for the full moon, he wandered to the old trysting-place. As he approached the grove the wind wailed mournfully through the trees, drowning the voice of the fairy rill, and the night was so dark that notwithstanding the gleam of an occasional star, he was close to the edge of the fountain before he saw, leaning against one of the tall beeches, the well-remembered figure of—Doctor Horn!

"Bon soir, Monsieur Albrecht!" said he to the astounded priest. "You did not expect to meet me here. I certainly do not often include the Fairy's Well in my regular walk, but I was fearfully thirsty and came down the mountain to drink of the enchanted water. And I am really grateful for the fortunate chance—the opportune thirst, eh!—which has procured me the pleasure of this unexpected meeting. Because I want to talk to you, to remonstrate with you, my dear boy, about your conduct, so unbecoming a chaplain."

"My conduct! unbecoming! What do you mean, Herr Doctor?"

"Come now, none of that feigned ignorance,

you sly rogue! Do you suppose I don't know of the very unclerical life you have been leading? Meeting a pretty girl night after night in this grove! I don't pretend to be a moralist, and no one has ever accused me of being strait-laced. But hang it! a priest in whom I take a strong interest to go on in this way is more than I can stand. If you had chosen to fall in love with a woman of earthly mould, I should rather applaud your spirit and your independence of those absurd restrictions men call vows. But an elf, a fairy, fie! Suppose now I were to inform your bishop of your philanderings with this precious Luna?"

"Not a word against Luna, if you please," broke in Albrecht impetuously. "She is—"

"Oh! I know what she is quite well. I will speak of her afterwards. But about the bishop, are you aware what would happen to you if he knew as much as I know?"

"I am not sure," answered Albrecht hesitatingly.

"You would be burnt at the stake as false priest, wizard, and dealer in forbidden arts!"

This was a contingency that had never previously occurred to Albrecht, yet he could not deny its possibility, and answered nothing.

"Never fear, my boy, I am not the man to betray you," resumed the doctor. "And the nymph for whom you risk so much, do you expect her to-night?"

"Assuredly! I will call her the moment the moon is visible, and she will come."

"Try, then, there he is; the black cloud that concealed him is drifting to leeward. Produce your talisman."

Albrecht drew the locket from his bosom—he opened it, but though the azure stone gave out a slight sparkle as the moonlight glanced upon it, the lily made no sign of life, and echo alone answered the agitated priest's repeated summons.

Doctor Horn laughed mockingly.

"It is my own fault," said Albrecht; "the talisman has power only when the moon is full—in three nights hence—"

"Try again, and you will be equally disappointed. You don't know elfin nature as I know it. Your beautiful nymphs do not enjoy the rigour of our northern winters. They fly with the swallows and return with the spring. The lovely Luna is, I doubt not, at this moment in sunny Spain, or fragrant Italy, bewitching some proud hidalgo, or laughing

in the beard of a grave worshipper of the prophet."

"It is false! false as hell! Thou liest, foul-mouthed fiend!" exclaimed Albrecht passionately.

"Oh! the conceit does not please your reverence; you grow choleric, and call hard names. Never mind, if you won't believe me you will believe your own senses one of these days. Come! it is cold and stupid, let us have a little game—cards and dice—nothing serious, merely *pour passer le temps*. I have the implements at hand."

"No, I thank you," said Albrecht coldly. "I am going home. And I just desire to say, Doctor Horn, that, inasmuch as I have never interfered with you, or crossed your path, except once, unwittingly, many years ago, I shall be glad if you will keep out of my way, and mind your own business."

"Nonsense, boy. I only desire to do you good, and prevent these deceitful fairies imposing upon you, and leading you into mischief. I will prove what I say. You expect that three nights hence, when the moon is at full, Luna will respond to your summons. If she does—good! I will never more speak to you or trouble you with my advice, unless

you seek me. If the nymph comes not, however, promise to play with me one game, here by the fountain—only one. No stakes, mind! No risking of your precious soul—ah! ah! All for love!"

"I promise."

"Good! I meet you here on—let me see. Yes, on Sunday, an hour past midnight. That will leave you enough time to amuse yourself with shouting for your elfin sweetheart. Good night. I wish your reverence pleasant dreams. Ah! ah!"

Thus saying, his satyr-like laugh ringing through the grove, the doctor, with the aid of his queer alpenstock, mounted the rocks with great celerity, and Albrecht, a prey to contending feelings, and oppressed with serious misgivings, returned to his solitary home. His dreams that night were not pleasant.

The three days that followed his interview with Doctor Horn were for Albrecht most wretched. The twin demons of jealousy and mistrust were tearing him in pieces. Could it be that there was truth in the strange doctor's insinuations, that he had been merely the sport and plaything of Luna—that instead of being his guardian spirit and good

angel, she was merely a wanton nymph, who had a mortal lover in every clime? If not, why had she deserted him, and why had his old unhappy feelings of doubt and unrest revived in full force? And yet —and yet had she not told him that her power was not always the same, that in dark and stormy weather, such as the present, her influence would be at times almost extinguished. And how solemnly had she warned him, "If thou shouldst ever distrust my love and doubt my power, then will thy danger be great." Might it not even be possible that the change in his feelings was in a great measure the cause of his inability to command, as before, the presence of Luna?

He would, come what might, cast away his doubt and distrust. He exerted all his strength of will, put forth his utmost efforts, to dismiss from his mind every feeling hostile to his peace and his love. For a while he succeeded, and enjoyed a short interval of tranquillity, but as the period of the full moon and his next visit to the Fairy's Well approached, he became conscious of the great mistake he had made in listening to Doctor Horn and so far losing sight of prudence as to make a bargain with

him. What might it not lead to? How could he, with the sardonic laughter and base insinuations of that emissary of Satan ringing in his ears, think calmly of his beautiful Luna, her noble and pious counsel, her deep wisdom, her tranquil soul? O heaven! how far already was he separated from her! how low had he fallen!

The night came—he went to the grove. The sky was thick and heavy, only occasionally as the wind shifted could the sheen of the full moon be discerned in the intervals between great masses of banked-up, thunderous-looking clouds.

Albrecht, his cherished amulet in his hand, knelt by the fountain, the sweet ripple of its gurgling waters filled his ear, and as the broken lights of the struggling moonbeams faintly illumined the silver clasped azure, he called aloud, he prayed for his beautiful fay, his dear Luna, to come to his arms, to keep from him the evil that threatened him. But distrust and doubt still lingered in his soul and weakened his will. He opened the locket—the water lily was not there, and oh, horror! in its stead, a snake—a tiny adder—raised its envenomed head, darted its poisonous tongue, and hissed its

baleful note. The priest flung the thing from him, and falling prone on the cold earth groaned aloud.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the mocking voice of the one-legged doctor. "Who tells the truth now, reverend father?—which is the deceiver? Doctor Horn or the Lady Luna? Come, man; don't be downcast; I'll console you—find you more fun and sport than all the nixies in creation. I'll show you what life is, my boy. Now for our little game—you promised, you know. Here are the tools."

The doctor coolly unscrewed his horns, and from the inside of each produced a die; he shook his game leg—out fell a silver dice-box, and from his yellow boot he pulled a pack of cards. The priest, desperate enough for anything, rose from the ground. "How can any one see to play in this darkness?" he asked.

"See!" replied the doctor. "We shall have light and to spare, and this stone will serve for a table." As he spoke the dice began to glow like fire-flies, and by their phosphorescent gleam Albrecht examined the cards. There were two sets of ten each, and every one bore on its face, in black letters, one

of the ten commandments, and thus contained amongst them two entire copies of the decalogue.

"What is the game, and how is it played?" asked Albrecht.

"It is rather a curious game; he who loses, wins. We each take a set of the cards. Then you, for instance, take a throw of the dice: if the cast is, let us say, a ten and a five you pass the tenth and the fifth commandments over to me. You go on playing until you throw fives or less, when I take the dice and proceed in a like manner. And so we continue until one or other has exhausted his cards; he who the soonest gets rid of his ten commandments remaining the victor. Do you see?"

"Curious! And what name do you give the game?"

"You may call it anything you like. I have only as yet given it a sort of sporting name of my own invention.

"And that is—?"

"Teufelschenslust!"

"The stakes?"

"I said before, that as you were an inexperienced player, we would not begin by playing for stakes.

But we must do something to add zest to the game. Stay! I will give you another proof of my disinterestedness. You shall, in a double sense, win if you lose. If you beat me, you shall have a night's hunting with us. I will give you Starlight to ride, a horse none has ever yet crossed but myself. If I am the victor, you shall please yourself, hunt or not, as it may suit you. Is it agreed?"

Albrecht nodded his assent, and the game began.

It went on for hours with varying fortunes. Sometimes the chaplain had nearly all the doctor's cards in his possession; at others he had got rid of all but one—then they crowded back to him again.

Albrecht followed the game silently, but the doctor never ceased his jokes and exclamations; and as the two bent over their rocky table by the well the scene was wild and weird in the extreme. The frocked priest, his face pale with excitement and suppressed emotion, never looking upward or aside, intent only on his play; the bare-headed doctor, his hissing snake, strange costume and sardonic features; the illuminated dice and blood-red cards with their black characters; the branches of the beech-trees creaking dismally in the night air, and

the great mountain above them looming large in the darkness.

Victory finally declared for Albrecht; not a single commandment remained in his hands. The game was finished.

"Good!" exclaimed the doctor. "You are fortunate. I have long known you were born under a lucky star. You have to go a-hunting with us to-morrow night, remember. Be ready at ten o'clock, and I will send a messenger for you; our fixtures are always at twelve p.m. Starlight shall be ready for you. I must ride old Blitz, I suppose; he is rather stiff on his pins at starting, but when he gets warm goes like the—"

"Devil!" suggested Albrecht, who had now become thoroughly reckless and demoralized.

"Good! ah, ah! exactly! like the devil. Blitz has been a famous horse in his time, I can tell you. Sultan Saladin's favourite charger; carried him on the day he had the great fight with Richard Cœur de Lion; friends of mine both. But come! we must have a little relaxation before saying 'Au revoir!' Here, little woman." The doctor gave his stump a vigorous shake. "Fetch some of them."

The adder fell loose on the grass, darted over the turf like a flash of lightning, and disappeared in the wood. Three minutes afterwards she returned, accompanied by a bevy of the most beautiful girls the chaplain had ever beheld, and notwithstanding the chilly weather their costumes were quite light and airy. They were closely followed by a strange-looking, bearded creature, who, so far as Albrecht could make out in the obscurity, appeared to be half man, half beast.

"Out with the pipes, Pan, and play us a lively measure," ordered Doctor Horn.

The strange creature set himself down on the trunk of a fallen tree, and immediately from his rude-seeming pipes there proceeded the briskest, most exciting music mortal man ever heard. It almost made the very rocks dance. The trees beat time with their branches, and the pebbles in the brook rolled over each other in irrepressible excitement. The poor priest went beside himself; he forgot his vows, his sacred character, his mother's blessing, Luna—everything, in a mad desire to dance. He joined hands with the infernal corps-de-ballet, and they all whirled round as if possessed. The

doctor acted as master of the ceremonies; standing in the centre of the circle he gesticulated fiercely with his death's-head staff, and the snake, curling now round his body, now over his shoulder, hissed loudly in frantic demoniac glee. And so the dance went on, until the doctor, clapping his hands, the music ceased, and Albrecht fell on the grass, exhausted and unconscious.

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When the priest recovered his senses the sun was just rising. He was quite alone, lying on the ground, and covered from head to foot with hoar frost. His first impression was that he had been the victim of an ugly dream, but on seeing beside him, on the grass, his locket, and close by it a great claw, he felt there was no room for doubt, that he had indeed gambled with Doctor Horn and joined in an unhallowed dance with the enemies of his soul. And full of sorrow and remorse—after vainly trying to open the talisman—he betook himself to his home. All day long he went about like one in a maze. His mind was in a perpetual ferment; he could not think or try to help himself in the least. He felt that he had surrendered all control of his will, and had a

sense of gradually sliding down a steep and slippery slope, at the bottom of which the enemy of mankind was waiting to receive him.

Night came. The clock went ten, and as the last stroke sounded, an ill-shaped, evil-looking dwarf entered the priest's house.

"Are you ready?" he said.

"Go!" replied Albrecht. "I follow."

The dwarf went, and, despite his clumsy form and short legs, glided along so rapidly that Albrecht had difficulty in keeping up with him. They went by devious ways and rarely trodden paths, and after more than an hour's walking found themselves in a valley which the priest, well as he knew the country, had never before seen. Almost circular in shape, it was bounded on two of its sides by immense masses of grey and rugged rocks, whose naked fronts reared themselves high in the darkling air. The outlet at the lower end narrowed, so as, in the prevailing obscurity, to be almost invisible, and the upper extremity was evershadowed by a background of mountain and forest. The rays of the almost full moon, unimpeded by clouds, revealed, in the very centre of this natural amphitheatre, and at the foot

of an isolated pinnacle of rock, an oasis of green and crispy turf.

To this the dwarf led Albrecht, and with the curt direction "wait," disappeared.

The priest had waited perhaps half an hour, pacing the while to and fro and lost in his unhappy thoughts, when he was roused to the present by the familiar "Bon jour, Monsieur," of Doctor Horn. Albrecht turned round. At first he thought he was dreaming. Such a change! The old voice was there; yes, and the same voice. He recognized, too, the hissing of the adder, but the eccentric costume had gone and the doctor had evidently donned his full-dress hunting uniform. His head was covered and his horns concealed by a magnificent cocked hat, with a plume of cock's feathers, and looped up with gold cord and ornamented in front with a single diamond of extraordinary size and lustre. A scarlet coat, turned up with white silk, was confined to his body by a broad belt of glowing phosphorus, suspended from which hung a *couteau de chasse* in a golden scabbard; and the snake slung across his shoulders, carried a silver hunting-horn. Nature or art had supplied the doctor with a new leg, for

both limbs were encased in long yellow boots, and he walked with a firm and even tread. He laughed in his sardonic way at the priest's astonishment.

"Ha! ha! ha! You don't know me in this masquerade. Very absurd it looks, no doubt; and I am sure I don't feel half as comfortable in it as in my every-day clothes. But one cannot always ignore the proprieties. Some great people—and ladies—will be at the meet to-night, and as I have the honour to be master of the hounds I feel myself in a measure compelled to maintain the dignity of my office."

"Master of the hounds! I never heard of them before. By what name are they known?"

"A very good name—the 'Devil's Own!' Ah! here come Starlight and old Blitz. How do you like your mount?"

At this moment appeared two horses, each led by a turbaned negro. Albrecht, who was a passionate admirer of the noble animal, at once, from the description already given to him by the doctor, recognized Starlight.

He was not a tall horse—little, if at all, over fifteen hands—but his proportions were symmetry

itself. A small intelligent head, "well set on," a fine muzzle, wide and crimson-lined nostrils, a neck beautiful as a rainbow, fine and sloping shoulders, a deep and wide chest, long and powerful quarters, well-bent hocks, legs broad and fine and muscular, as strong as steel, and as elastic as whalebone. His coat was as bright as silver, and the yellow flecks—the flea-bites—in the moonshine, and under the gleam of the doctor's fiery baldrick, shone like gold.

"Mount!" said Horn.

Albrecht jumped with alacrity into the saddle.

"I know you can ride," continued the doctor. "I have often seen you on that wild colt at the mill. But Starlight does not want riding, you have only to sit still and his action is so easy and light that it would be difficult not to sit still. Give him his head, let him have his own way, and he will carry you over anything and to any distance. But here come our friends; excuse me." And he cantered off to meet a stately-looking personage who was ambling towards them on a big black horse with a Roman nose.

"Good evening, my lord Cardinal. I am glad you

are out with us to-night. How goes the last arrival from the eternal city. How have you left his holiness? Finds it rather warm, eh? Get used to it by-and-by."

A tall, fierce-looking, bearded cavalier, his head armed, and a plated cuirass glittering on his giant-like chest, now joined the group.

"I salute your highness of the Huns," said the doctor; "I hope the chase to-night will be to the liking of the great Attila, the Scourge of God!"

"Ah! the ladies!" and turning round, he doffed his plumed hat, bending almost to his saddle bow.

"Welcome to our sport, lovely Cleopatra! I am charmed to see you, lady Elfrida! We are indeed highly favoured when the divine Astarte, the noble Messalina, and the beauteous Lucrezia, condescend to grace our hunt with their presence. But I pray you excuse me, fair ladies; I must greet my other guests."

"I bid you good even, my gallant Borgia! how fares it with your worthy sire?"

"Ah! Don Pedro, and the illustrious Torquemada! Your acceptance of my invitation, gentlemen, confers

on me supreme honour, Spain is worthily represented in your persons!"

And so the doctor went about, speaking to every one, greeting every fresh arrival, and when he had completely made the circuit of his friends, he returned to the side of the wondering priest.

"I don't see any hounds yet," remarked the latter; "when will the hunt begin?"

"The hounds! see, there they come out of that gap between the two tall rocks!"

Albrecht looked and saw advancing towards them first, an immensely tall, strong grey horse, on which rode a man of large frame, clad from head to foot in red—hat, coat, breeches, and boots, all were red. His hair and beard were red and his face was red. He was followed by—the priest could not believe the evidence of his own senses—he rubbed his eyes and looked again. No, he was not mistaken—it was a pack of wolves! black, gaunt, and savage. There were twenty couples of them in all, and the neck of each was encircled by a collar of phosphorus similar in appearance to the doctor's baldrick, and between their eyes gleamed in live sulphur the semblance of a death's-head. Two whippers-in, attired like the

huntsman, with the exception of their caps, which were white, brought up the rear.

"Surprises never cease, do they, Albrecht?" laughed the doctor. "You expected to see ordinary hounds —dogs, I suppose. I go back to the original stock, and conduct my hunting on scientific principles. The scenting properties of "kennel-fed" hounds must of necessity become impaired; their food being brought to them, they grow indifferent about seeking it for themselves. My hounds eat only what they win in the chase; they are consequently always as keen as razors, and the game that evades their pursuit must be swift and cunning indeed. I have, too, a capital huntsman; do you know who he is?"

"No!"

"William Rufus, once King of England! generally known as the 'Red King,' still his favourite colour, as you see."

The chaplain began to think he had got into queer company.

"Come!" exclaimed the master of the "Devil's Own;" "it is time for the stirrup-cup. What ho, there! tell Ganymede to bring nectar!"

In a moment appeared a beautiful and graceful

youth, who handed round crystal goblets boiling over, as it appeared to Albrecht, with sparkling wine.

"What think you of Ganymede?" asked the doctor, "ever since paganism went out of fashion in Europe, he has been my butler. Jupiter stole him from Tros, and I stole him from Jupiter; ha! ha! ha! What? won't you drink?"

"I cannot, it boils!"

"Nonsense, man! drain a goblet, it will give you new life and courage."

Albrecht drank. Immediately fire seemed to course through his veins, his spirits rose, he felt more than mortal, and flinging the goblet to the ground, he galloped after the doctor, who was already riding rapidly up the valley.

"What has been marked down for us to-night, Rufus?" asked the latter of the royal huntsman.

"A beam-antlered stag was seen half an hour ago to pass through Deadman's Copse; if we lay the 'beauties' on at once, we shall be likely to have a good run."

"All right! go ahead!"

Emerging from the glen, the cavalcade rode out

on a bare, wide-spreading plateau, covered with heather and intersected by one or two wide and deep brooks. About a mile distant stood a solitary clump of firs, the Deadman's Copse, so called because of a terrible murder once committed there. To this copse the red king led his forty wolves. At a wave of his hand, in they dashed, and in a few minutes an unearthly yell proclaimed that they had tracked their prey. They ran out on the heath, frantic with excitement, their long cruel teeth gleaming by the light of their fiery collars and glowing death's heads. Up to this moment every horseman save Rufus and his whippers-in had sat by the copse motionless and silent. But when the wolves were fairly away, Rufus blew a tremendous blast on his horn, the doctor roared out in a savage and stentorian voice, the single word "Now!" and all broke out into the maddest gallop that ever was seen. They swept over the heath like a hurricane—nothing stopped them—every one seemed to fly, but the doctor, the huntsman, and the priest were always in the first flight.

Starlight appeared to have the wings of the wind. Blitz, by his lightning-like pace showed himself worthy of his name, and the red king's grey horse

seemed scarcely to touch the earth as he raced by the side of the wolfish pack. They left the heath behind them, and sped through a gloomy forest whose huge branches intercepted the moon's light; trunks of fallen trees lay across the path, no vestige of a path was visible, but the hunt slackened not, the yell of the wolves in front never ceased. Rufus cheered them to the echo, and the blast of his horn rang through the welkin. The night owl shrieked, the raven croaked, the timid hare started from her form, the terrified peasant crossed himself as the fearful chase swept on. They skirted the side of a precipitous mountain, then rushed headlong down the opposite slope—at the bottom was a yawning chasm, black, wide, and unfathomable, the horses took it in their stride—their iron hoofs struck showers of sparks from the frozen and stony ground. They flew rather than galloped over the smaller and the greater Winterbergs. They mounted the rugged sides of the Prebisch Thor and descended like an avalanche into the gorge of the Kamnitz. They are at the gates of Bohemia. The pack has left them and is nowhere to be seen. Suddenly a yell is heard, loud enough and fierce enough to startle the very rocks.

"Hark!" exclaimed the doctor. "The stag is at bay. Onward! or we shall be too late for the death." They urge madly down the glen, they pass Hirnskretschen; before them is the Elbe, a broad and rapid river, covered with masses of snow-white ice that surge against each other with a drear and hollow sound. The pursuers and the pursued have swum the stream, and in the shallow water on the further side the stag has turned to bay. Reckless of cold and ice, the leading horsemen plunge into the swollen and rushing river; their steeds breast the swift waters; the hunters are in time for the death.

"The antlered monarch of the waste" fights desperately for his life; he tosses one fierce assailant over his head, he tramples another under his feet, he transfixes a third with his horns.

He struggles in vain, the contest is too unequal. Some of the wolves fasten on his heaving flanks, some on his quivering nostrils, others fly at his throat; they tear him in pieces; their horrid teeth and black muzzles are dyed in his blood, and in a few minutes the poor stag, uttering a last piteous groan, has sunk into the dark river.

"What think you of our sport?" asked the doctor of Albrecht, after they had re-crossed the stream.

"The ride was magnificent, glorious! I think Starlight, and Blitz, and the red king's horse must have invisible wings. But I felt sorry for that poor stag, his death was a sad sight."

"You need not be sorry. Do you know what we have been hunting?"

"Certainly! a stag."

"True, it had the appearance of one. But come nearer." Horn approached his lips to the priest's ear, and whispered, in a voice that made the latter's blood curdle in his veins, "We have been hunting a murderer's soul!"

A mortal terror fell upon Albrecht; he could not speak, his teeth chattered, he was scarcely able to keep his seat. When the doctor spoke again it was in his usual tone.

"A long ride home, my boy! promise to come out with us again, and I will send to your parsonage by a near cut!"

Albrecht, who in his present mood would have promised anything, to be anywhere but where he

was, eagerly assented to this proposal. The doctor looked fixedly at him for a few seconds, made a few passes with his hands, and the priest fell on his horse's neck, in a deep sleep.

* * * * * *

When Albrecht awoke next morning he was in his own house and his own bed. How he had come there he knew not, and it was only after some reflection, together with the sense of soreness in his whole body—the effect of hard riding—and the sight of his torn and soiled garments, that he convinced himself that he had really been out with the "Devil's Own," and had promised to go again. Then came over him the same horror he had felt the night before, and though he had given his word, and had begun to have a great dread of the terrible doctor, he resolved within himself that he would forfeit his very life, rather than take part in such another diabolical hunt, that he would dissolve all connexion, and entirely cease his intercourse with Doctor Horn. This resolution afforded some relief to his distracted mind, and he went about his duties during the day—it was Sunday—with more satisfaction than he had experienced since the

disappearance of Luna. He determined, though with little hope of success, to make that very night yet another attempt to see her.

He crept timidly and furtively to the well, terrified lest the doctor should again be there before him, and it was with a sense of inexpressible thankfulness that he found himself quite alone. He prayed long and earnestly, and then, concentrating his will in one intense wish, called aloud for Luna, and opened the talisman. Despair! in it was still the accursed snake! As Albrecht was in the act of casting snake, locket, and all into the fountain, his arm was arrested by the sweet voice he so passionately loved.

"Throw not the talisman away; it may yet save thee!"

"Come to me, O my Luna!"

"Until the adder is exchanged for the lily that may not be. Listen! for my power is low and my time short, our converse must be brief. Thou hast deeply sinned, Albrecht, and done me grievous wrong in thy thoughts. Said I not that in dark and stormy weather my strength to help thee waned? Did I not warn thee? Shouldst thou

ever distrust my love and doubt my power, then would thy danger be great. It was thy distrust and thy wicked doubts that chased away the beautiful lily, and admitted that odious adder into thy talisman. And now thou art almost given over, body and soul, to Doctor Horn, who is none other than the Evil One himself. Nothing but thy present horror of him, and thy returning love for me, has given thee this last chance of rescue. Listen! lose not a word of what I say. The doctor, as we may still call him, believes thou art already his; he thinks I am powerless to warn or to save thee; he is mistaken. Seek him out, boldly demand the lily, and insist on his taking back the snake. He is compelled to allow thee to redeem the pledge of which thy own folly has allowed him to deprive thee. He will propose some game of skill or chance which shall decide the fate of the talisman and of thy soul; thy body is already forfeit to him. Accept his offer, but on no consideration whatever play more than one game. And pray heaven for a quiet night and a full moon; and if victory declare for thee secure thy redeemed treasure, and hasten with all speed to the Fairy's Well." The voice ceased,

and though Albrecht lingered by the fountain for hours, the silence was no more broken, save by the ripple of the crystal brook and the rustling of the trees.

* * * * * *

More than a week elapsed before the chaplain again sought the haunt of Doctor Horn, and he then went to him full of courage, resolute to act on the advice given to him by Luna. He found the object of his search in the usual place.

"Want to speak to me, old fellow? Ah, I see you do! What is it? Will you come to the "meet" to-night, ride Starlight again, eh?"

"No, doctor! I don't intend to hunt with the 'Devils Own' any more. Once in a lifetime is quite enough, I think."

"Why, what's the matter? didn't you enjoy yourself?"

"And I'll trouble you to return me my lily, and take your adder back!" continued Albrecht, not heeding the interruption.

"I shall do nothing of the sort," replied the doctor angrily. "The exchange of the flower and the snake is the pledge of our contract, a proof

that you belong to me. Do you imagine I have treated you as I have done, procured you so many pleasures, for nothing?"

"I have knowingly made no compact with you, and I insist on my right to redeem my talisman."

"Very well. Every Christmas eve, at midnight, I play a game at skittles with a few friends in the Field of Death on the Hälberbusche. You shall play with us. If you win—good! you get your wonderful water-lily. Your soul the penalty if you lose. Do you agree?"

"I agree."

"Adieu, then, until our next meeting on the Hälberbusche."

And the doctor hopped away over the rocks, his skull smoking, and his adder hissing, exactly as when the chaplain first encountered him.

It is Christmas eve on the Field of Death—the hour, midnight; snow lies thick on the ground, the sky is bright and clear, the moon at full. In the middle of the field, between two rows of skulls and human bones, is the skittle-ground; at its further end is a pyramid of skulls, from whose eyeless sockets and fleshless jaws issue jets of blue fire.

The skittles are arranged on the snow; every skittle is a death's-head; in the centre, as queen, stands Doctor Horn's staff and skull, the latter as usual smoking a cigar.

The players are seven in number; Doctor Horn and five companions, and Albrecht the chaplain. The doctor wears his every-day clothes, the five wear scarlet mantles; from their shoulders downwards they are skeletons, and, when the wind blows aside their mantles, lurid flames are seen curling round their white and naked bones. The chaplain is attired in his ordinary priestly costume. He has placed his amulet on the ground; if he wins, he will find, at the conclusion of the game, the adder exchanged for the lily. Every player supplies himself with a huge snowball, and the doctor and his friends each lifts off his head and places it on the snow. The former signs to Albrecht to begin, he has already explained to him that, being a stranger and a visitor, he is expected to play first.

With a silent prayer, and the name of Luna on his lips, the chaplain delivers his ball—steadily, firmly—it rolls straight amongst the skittles — all go down; the queen — the doctor's smoking

skull — falls on its cigar, breaks, and puts it out.

"Now!" shouts the master of the 'Devil's Own,' "I told you you were born under a lucky star, but you won't find it easy to beat us at skittles, I can tell you! Now it is my turn."

One of the skeletons rearranges the skittles and gives the smoking skull another cigar. The doctor throws his ball without seeming to care whether he hits or misses, but as it approaches the skittles it turns into a ball of fire, and every one of them falls. All the skeletons play, but all come behind the doctor and the chaplain. Again the latter plays, again the skittles go down before his ball, a second time Horn plays an equally good game. Fortune still favours Albrecht, and every skittle falls for the third time to his play. But he begins to fear the game will be interminable, and watches the doctor's third round with intense anxiety. This time the player delivers his ball with more care, and every skittle falls but one; the queen remains erect and smoking, Albrecht has won. Uttering a shout of triumph, he rushes to his talisman—joy! the lily has returned. Without a moment's pause he seizes the locket, and darts off at full speed.

"Follow him! follow him!" roars the doctor, "he has saved his soul, but we may at least tear his body in pieces."

Down the hill, over the frozen snow, through bush and brake went the chaplain; impelled by fear and sustained by hope, he sped onward like the wind. He looked over his shoulder, his fell pursuers were coming on behind him at break-neck pace. Horn was first, leaping forward with astonishing agility; his companions were close to him—their mantles streaming in the air, the bright flames lapping round their fleshless frames, and shooting, tongue-like, above their shoulders. But in their great hurry they had all replaced their heads in the wrong position—not one could see straight before him; some looked over the right shoulder, some over the left—the heads of two were turned completely round, their owners had to look one way and run another. They tumbled against each other, they tripped each other up, they tumbled heels over head on the slippery snow. Horn cursed, and swore, and foamed with rage. Still the demon crew raced on, but now Albrecht gained on them; hope beat high in his breast, he neared the fountain, he entered the grove. A sound as of heavenly music fell on his

ear, silvery voices chaunted a melody of ravishing sweetness :—

> "The azure talisman is saved!
> Talisman in moonbeams laved;
> Albrecht's soul shall ever be
> From the demon yoke set free.
>
> Mortal, fleeing from thy foe,
> Come, where mystic waters flow!
> Come, where guardian spirits dwell!
> Haste thee to the Fairy's Well!"

A group of nymphs stood hand in hand before the fountain. Luna was in the midst of them. Albrecht rushed into her extended arms. He raised the talisman aloft in triumph.

"Saved! saved!" he shouted.

But the hoarse voice of the Evil One was heard exclaiming,—

"Give him up! Give him up! His body is forfeit to me. He is a traitor! We will rend him limb from limb!"

The chaplain was enfolded in Luna's loving embrace. "Thy soul," she whispered, in her low

sweet voice, "is saved, but thy body will be safe only in the fountain. Come! the mortal part of thee shall rest there, and our spirits will be happy for ever with the spirits of my people."

"Beloved Luna! I am ready."

And locked in each other's arms, the fairy and her mortal lover plunged into the well, and sank beneath its waters. The elfin throng, chaunting a celestial requiem, melted slowly into the moonbeams, and the fiend, with his fiery phantoms, uttering a howl of impotent rage, fled into the recesses of the mountain.

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After many days the body of the chaplain was found lying at the bottom of the well, arms folded, and with a smile of happiness still lingering on his face. The body was carried away and laid in consecrated ground, where, as much as in the fountain, it was beyond the reach of the Evil One, and the spring in the grove has ever since been known as the "Priest's Well."

Doctor Horn is still occasionally seen on the banks of the Mandau, and on the sunny side of the

mountain, but not so frequently as of yore, and his head, which in old times he generally wore on his shoulders, is now invariably carried under his arm.

## CONVENT BEER; OR, THE MALT MONK.

IT was noon in the Franciscan monastery of Zittau, and the good monks of the order were assembled at their midday meal. The viands with which the rough, though substantial table, was loaded, indicated that the day was a "flesh day;" and considering that the brethren were restricted to one kind of meat, the variety and excellence of the dishes did great credit to those of them who superintended the convent kitchen. Soup, that would have made a modern *chef-de-cuisine* die of envy, was followed by magnificent sirloins and barons of beef, roasted and boiled to a turn. Down each side of the board was a glorious array of savoury steaks, smothered in piquant sauces, and great, brown,

rich, crisp-looking pasties. After grace had been duly said, the holy men fell to right heartily, and it was quite evident that how solicitous soever they might be for the welfare of their souls, they were none the less so for the nourishment of their bodies. But good cheer, strangely enough, did not produce cheerfulness. There was a striking absence of the mirth and jollity usual on such occasions. In their stead reigned silence and gloom. A single glance revealed the cause. The friars ate, but they drank not. And yet, before each, stood a huge horn of beer filled to the brim. Occasionally a monk, bolder than the rest, ventured to taste, but the hasty way in which the horn, after such an experiment, was put down, and the wry face of the taster, proclaimed in language more potent than words the melancholy truth—the liquor was bad.

Nowhere has King Cambrinus, the immortal inventor of beer, more devoted admirers and worshippers than in the *Vaterland*, and the admiration is not of the flimsy, theoretical sort, which finds expression only in words; it is deep, sincere, universal, and is manifested in that love for the generous beverage which comes next to the love of country

—the country of good beer—in the great German heart.

As it is now, so it was in the days of Abbot Petrus, of Zittau; but his love, and the love of his monks, for malt liquor, was in a wonderful degree enhanced by the fact that, by the rules of their order, the drinking of wine was prohibited, and it was not diminished by the difficulty they experienced in procuring an article of prime quality. They had no variety of taps to choose from, but were strictly limited to the produce of the town's brewery, which, being an official monopoly, was—as monopolies generally are—badly conducted, and it rarely happened, and even then more by accident than skill, that a really good brew was turned out.

This state of things was a great and sore trouble to the worthy monks of St. Francis, for even better than a profuse dinner on a flesh day did they enjoy a stoup of clear, light, bright, foaming old ale.

"The beer is worse than usual to-day," said Abbot Petrus, from his dais, in the centre of the cross table. "Canst thou tell us, good brother Laurentius, how this happens to be such a miserable brew?"

"Too much water, and too little hops!" quoth, in a deep voice, the monk addressed, a big, burly, rather unwieldly-looking friar, remarkable for his large mouth, thick lips, black brows, and heavy forehead. He had only one quality—was indeed considered amongst his brethren to be otherwise somewhat thick-witted—a wonderful taste for beer. Not simply that he liked it—such a trait in such a community could in no wise have distinguished him. The taste of Laurentius was that of an adept, of a connoisseur, of a man marked out by nature for a great brewer. One sip of a liquor was enough to inform him as to its age, its ingredients, the time of year in which it had been brewed, its excellencies and faults; and so highly was his knowledge esteemed that, in spite of the simplicity of his character, he was, next to the abbot, held to be the greatest man in the convent.

"It is not to be endured," resumed the abbot, "that we should be thus treated by these miserly burghers, that a wretched brew like this should be imposed on us, and—heaven save the mark!—called beer! It is all very well for the town to tolerate such stuff, inasmuch as the thinner the liquor the

greater their profit. But as for us, to whom is prohibited the more generous wine, and who have daily and nightly to spend ourselves in fasts, and vigils, and penance, and in saying masses for the souls of departed burghers, life cannot be supported on nearly hopless, and maltless, and watered beer. It is almost, my brethren, as bad as water itself!"

As the speaker paused a deep murmur of assent ran round the table. "If we had only a brewhouse of our own!" ejaculated Brother Laurentius.

"Perhaps," said another monk, "if the lord abbot were to represent the hardships of our lot to the burgomaster, the town might be persuaded to build us a brew-house."

The proposal was received with every token of hearty approval.

"A most commendable suggestion, good brother," answered Petrus; "and to-morrow, early, I will assuredly hie me to our worthy chief magistrate, and pray him to grant us the means of making our own liquor."

The next day accordingly the abbot—a jolly-looking priest, with a roguish twinkle in his grey

eye, a double chin that plainly denoted good cheer, and a general contentment with this "vale of tears," as he was in the habit in his sermons of describing the present life—made a visit to the burgomaster.

"Worthy father of the town!" he said, "it is no doubt known to you how hard and self-denying is the life of them who, renouncing all those pleasures which mankind in general hold so dear, dedicate themselves to the service of heaven and our holy church. Do you think it right and just, that, in addition to their spiritual troubles, their self-inflicted tortures, their never-ending prayers and ceaseless watchings, they should be called upon to bear still other pains, anxieties, and privations? Say, what think you?

The burgomaster—a short, stout, pursy, and pompous individual, with a long face, and a very long nose, on which was perched a long pair of horn-framed spectacles then just coming into use, and who was as orthodox as burgomasters are wont to be—intimated that he could scarcely conceive the existence of such a state of things as that implied in the abbot's question, a question to which he replied emphatically in the negative.

"Verily," continued the Franciscan, "Zittau is most fortunate in its chief magistrate; wisdom and piety preside over its councils; its burghers are under the special protection of Providence. Had the cloister been your choice, and the church your sphere, most worthy lord burgomaster, your honoured name had doubtless been found high in the ranks of her saints."

Greedy as "the father of the town" was of flattery, fully convinced as he was of his own greatness, this dose of the abbot's was rather more than he could swallow without grimace. "My poor worldly knowledge does not enable me fully to understand the meaning of your words, holy father," he remarked. "Might I crave further enlightenment?"

"Knowledge, my son, comes not in a moment like a swarm of grasshoppers, but slowly, by degrees, and with advancing years. Wisdom is yours, the town is wealthy and prosperous. Heaven ha showered upon both its richest blessings, the responsibilities of both are therefore very great—in the words of Holy Writ, 'To whom much is given, from him shall much be required. Amen!' What do you think of the town's beer?"

The burgomaster was so utterly astounded at this extraordinary and unexpected change of the subject that for a few minutes he was quite speechless, and could only glare at the priest through his great horn goggles.

"What think I of our town's beer? What in the name of all the saints has what you have been saying to do with beer?"

"Everything, worthy father of the town, as I will briefly expound to you. The soul and the body hold so closely together, that unless the one has its due share of nourishment the other cannot be sound and healthy. How can we poor friars keep our vigils, contend with evil spirits, and perform all the duties the rules of our order impose on us; how can we expect freedom in preaching and unction in praying unless we have good eating and drinking? Now, can any man call the miserable brew supplied to us by the town good drink? I trow not!"

"How can we improve it, father? I have done everything—"

"I am deputed by my holy brethren to make to you in this regard a proposal."

"Speak! What is the proposal?"

"We pray you, good lord burgomaster, out of the abounding wealth of the town to build for our convent a brewhouse; then will we make our own liquor, and if it be not such as will effectually aid in keeping body and soul together the blame be ours."

The proposal did not seem displeasing to the burgomaster; he promised to take it into consideration, and the abbot betook himself again to his monastery.

The brewhouse was built; and although nothing had been said as to whose property it should be, the abbot did all he could to mark it as belonging to the Order. Over the doorway, in a convenient niche, the effigy of a Franciscan friar was placed; in another, the figure of the holy Francis himself; and here and there, built into the wall, were sculptured representations of sandals, gowns, and hempen girdles, and on the summit of the building was erected a gigantic cross. Evidently the brewery was an ecclesiastical structure; it bore all over, the impress of the church.

The town further presented to the brethren a sufficiency of barley and hops for a commencement,

and lent them a decent man from the town brewhouse as manager. But Brother Laurentius was appointed inspector; his to see that the barley was rightly malted, that the hops were sufficient in quantity, that the cooling did not proceed too slowly or too fast, and, above all, that the liquor was not too thin. And well did he perform his functions; the good monks were more than satisfied, and the fame of the convent beer spread far and wide. Never had Abbot Petrus been so happy; his eyes twinkled more brightly, his cheeks waxed rosier than ever; and his double chin threatened to develope into a treble one.

But the great success and fame of the convent beer brought about a result little anticipated by the burgomaster and burghers of Zittau, and one very unwelcome to them. Country people no longer bought their beer at the town brewhouse; they all went to the convent, and as the brethren found the business by no means unprofitable they were careful to send no one empty away. The town made every effort to improve the quality of their liquor. They used the best hops and the best barley money could buy. Nothing was wanting in the matter of strength,

the flavour was undeniably good. Yet all was of no use. Customers still flocked to the monastery, and the burgomaster was in despair, for the profits of the brewery were an important item in the revenues of the town. He remonstrated with the abbot on his ingratitude in taking away the town's business after they had built for the convent a brewhouse. The abbot replied that now to give up selling their beer and abandon their profits would be doing dis-service to God and the Church; robbing the poor, in fact, as their gains were all devoted to charity and other pious uses. If there were, however, any secret in the making of their beer, the convent would freely disclose it—from morning to night the doors of the brewhouse should be open to all the town, everybody might see everything.

When this permission was made known all the world of Zittau flocked to the monks' brewery, especially the people from the public brewery. Great was their curiosity; every process was minutely and eagerly watched, followed, and criticized. Equally great was the general wonderment when it was found that nothing new was to be discovered. Everything was done exactly as in the town establishment; in no

single point was a whit of difference discernible. Still, the convent beer was undeniably, and by a long way, the best; but how did the superiority arise? No one could find out; the puzzle deepened into a mystery; the burgomaster was at his wit's end, and the town brewer had serious thoughts of smothering himself in his own mash-tub.

It never occurred to these worthies that the abbot's permission to visit the monks' brewhouse, apparently so open and liberal, extended to only one half the twenty-four hours—from morning to night. Nothing had been said about from night to morning, nor did anybody suspect that it was during the hours of darkness that Brother Laurentius made his solitary rounds. It was then he tested the malt and tasted the beer, always using for the purpose a little rose-wood bowl, which he carried in his hood; he inspected everything, and then in the morning quietly gave his orders. A little more browning of the malt, a longer cooling of the wort, a trifling addition of hops; and as his taste and judgment were infallible, there was never such a thing as a bad brew known in the convent brewery, and the reputation of its beer grew higher and higher.

Like most other monasteries the house of the Franciscan friars of Zittau had large underground apartments, vaults, and secret passages, one of which it was said communicated with another convent away in the mountains. Often during the night were strange noises, and sounds as of laughter and boisterous singing heard, proceeding, as it seemed, from below the earth. Sceptics and scoffers did not hesitate to give it as their opinion that on such occasions the monks were having a carouse, an orgie even, and some went so far as to hint that they could often detect in the uproar the shrill laughter of female voices. But these dishonourable and impious insinuations were quickly frowned down by the faithful and orthodox burghers of Zittau; and it was properly pointed out that these often-heard sounds from the nether world must of necessity come from the kobalds, dwarfs, elves, and fairies, who, it was well known, held nightly their underground revels. It happened that one of these secret ways of the convent went close by the cellar of the brewhouse, and Abbot Petrus, in order to facilitate the nocturnal inspections of Brother Laurentius, had caused a communication

between the two—the cellar and the passage—to be opened.

Now, the head brewer, who lived in a cottage close to the brewery, had a daughter—Barbara—a good-looking, rosy-cheeked, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed lass of seventeen. Late one night her father, remembering that he had forgotten something in the brewery, told Barbara to take the keys and fetch it for him. The girl went. As she turned to go back with the article her father had forgotten, she fancied she heard the sound of a heavy footstep in the malt loft overheard. She was a sharp, discreet, and withal, a brave girl; so, instead of screaming or running away, she quietly waited. Presently the bulky form of the inspector was seen descending the steps; then he went round the room examining everything, tasting everything, always using for the purpose his curious rosewood bowl. As he turned his back Barbara slipped quietly away, let herself noiselessly out, and returned to her father's house. She said nothing about what she had seen, but she thought none the less, and tried hard to conjecture what was the special object of the monk's nightly visit; for by peeping diligently through a keyhole

she had ascertained that his visits were nightly, and she was beyond everything puzzled as to how the priestly inspector contrived to get into the brewery. Even if he had a key he must necessarily enter through the door; but no one had ever, by any chance, seen him except during the day, either going in or out of the brewery, or in the road between the brewery and the convent. There was a mystery somewhere, and the girl was shrewd enough to conclude that the secret of the convent beer was concealed under the cowl of Brother Laurentius.

* * * * * *

There were trouble and gloom in the house of the chief brewer of the public brewhouse of Zittau. He had done all he could to bring his beer to an equality with that of the convent—he had long been devoured with anxiety, sleep and appetite had left him, a smile was never seen on his careworn countenance, and now, to crown all, the burgomaster had informed him that unless he very quickly produced as good an article as that turned out by the monks, he could not retain his situation, a respite of a month only was allowed to him. He sat in his cottage, sombre and silent, puffing furiously at his long pipe,

and enveloped in a thick cloud of smoke. Opposite to him sat his son Emil, a young fellow of one or two and twenty, looking equally gloomy, for he was in love with the pretty Barbara, and if his father and himself were turned out of house and home, he could scarcely look for a happy issue to his suit.

"I can do nothing more," said the brewer; "not if all Lusatia could be mine, not if I were else to be roasted alive! Over and over again have I gone through the brewhouse of those accursed friars; there is not a feather of difference between their brewing and our brewing."

"Then there must be a secret, father, for the beer is better."

"Truly is the beer better. I cannot deny it, but what chance have I of finding it out?"

"Well, thou knowest, father, I love the pretty Barbara," said Emil hesitatingly, for the old man was not quite in the humour for listening favourably to love stories.

"Love her! I daresay! But there is scant chance of thy marrying her, I ween."

"Mayhap she can discover the secret for us, and then—"

"And then thou mayest marry her. But what can a girl like her know of the secret?"

"We will see," said Emil thoughtfully.

The same evening Emil went to visit and have a walk with the pretty Barbara. She quickly noticed the taciturnity of her lover's manner, and the evident lowness of his spirits. He made no secret of the cause, and told her frankly and sorrowfully, that unless he could find out how the monks brewed their beer, he and his father would lose their situations, and there would be no possibility of his marrying. For some minutes after this announcement Barbara remained silent. She had kept to herself the knowledge of the nocturnal visits of the inspector, partly for fear of getting into trouble with the abbot, and partly for fear of injuring her father. But now, when it had become a question of losing her lover, she could no longer remain silent.

"Brother Laurentius is the secret, Emil," she said. And thereon she told him all she had seen and knew. She had not, however, been able to discover how the inspector found his way into the brewery, and at her lover's earnest entreaty consented to watch for one night all the old friar's movements,

from his entry into the brewhouse to his exit. Emil promised to procure her keys, one of which would be sure to fit, so that she could slip out of the house after all had gone to bed, and no one be the wiser. So Barbara did, and she was able, when next she saw her lover, to tell him that Laurentius came into the brewhouse through the cellar, and she told him, too, how carefully he examined and sifted the malt, tasted the liquor in the great cooling vat, and ended by drinking a good deal of new beer. She described the singular rosewood bowl, and a curious glass instrument that the inspector used, such as she had never before seen, and gave it as her opinion that they would do no good at the town brewery until they could get Brother Laurentius to sift their malt, test their liquor, and taste their beer.

"Ach Gott!" said Emil, "I must watch the fat old rascal myself, perhaps he does something else that thou hast not yet seen. Let me into the brewery to-morrow night, Barbara."

After some hesitation the girl consented, and it was agreed that the next evening, at eleven o'clock, Emil should be at the door of the brewhouse, and that Barbara should meet him there.

Punctually to the minute he came, and after waiting a short time, was joined by his sweetheart. They rambled hand in hand through the silent and deserted brewhouse, and it was so long before the inspector came, that they were compelled, in order to keep themselves warm, to drink a good many horns of beer—so many that when they at last heard the ponderous tread of Laurentius on the cellar steps, they were decidedly in high spirits, not to say merry. The friar, intent on his business, had not the least idea that he was watched, and went about the malt room, to which they followed him, tasting and sifting, now shaking his head, now muttering to himself, and evidently making a mental note when anything pleased him. Then—the lovers hiding themselves the while under the stairs—he slowly came down again, and turned in the direction of another apartment, where stood an enormous vat of nearly fermented beer, ready for drawing off next day. Laurentius drew from his hood the rosewood bowl, took a drink of the liquor, and after rolling it solemnly for some moments in his capacious mouth, let it gurgle slowly down his throat. He tasted again and again, and at length giving a deep grunt of

pleasure, leaned forward, and in a thick husky voice, prayed a blessing on the brew. At this moment Emil, whispering hastily to Barbara, "Now is the time to find out the secret!" ran up to the monk and gave him a hearty smack on the back, exclaiming, "The secret, father! tell me the secret of the convent beer!"

The youth's sudden appearance, and the slap on the back, were too much for the inspector's nerves; he started violently, gave a lurch forward, lost his balance, and fell head-foremost into the vat. Emil was barely in time to seize him by one of his fat legs, and only after a severe struggle, in which he was assisted by Barbara, was the friar brought right end up. When his head was once above beer, he grasped convulsively at the side of the vat, and stared in a bewildered manner at the laughing lovers.

"The secret!" repeated Emil; "the secret, you fat old villain! You are ruining us every one, with your convent beer! How do you make it? What do you put into it? Tell me, or, donnerwetter! I'll drown you in your own brew!"

But the poor friar was past thinking or answering

coherently. What with his frequent tastings, and the beer he had swallowed when he was head down in the vat, he was very far gone indeed; he had lost all consciousness of time and place, felt himself going round and round, in a never-ending circle, had a vague idea that he was in purgatory, condemned, for his love of beer in the flesh, to float in a lake of his favourite beverage for a hundred years, and that Emil and Barbara were demons appointed to torment him. His vain attempts to speak, the great eyes of him rolling in drunken surprise, his wide mouth, opening instinctively to take in the liquor that occasionally flowed over his jaws; his thick naked legs and sandaled feet, ever and anon bobbing up and down through the frothing brown mass, had such an irresistibly ludicrous effect that the lovers laughed long and uproariously, adding, if that were possible, to the poor friar's bewilderment. Both were holding him up, when, in one of their merry paroxysms, Emil's grasp slightly relaxed. The heavy frame of Laurentius went down like lead, and, ere Barbara had time to loosen her grasp of his girdle, she was dragged into the vat, and the next instant had sunk from the

view of the horror-struck Emil. Neither monk nor maiden re-appeared, and the despairing lover, appalled at the terrible event of which he was the cause, and cut to the soul at the death of his pretty Barbara, plunged after her into the vat and sank to rise no more.

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When the brewery men came to their work the next morning, they were surprised to find the inspector's rosewood bowl floating in the great vat. As they drew off the beer, one of their first proceedings was, naturally enough, to taste it. They were astonished and delighted. Their convent beer was always good, but this was more than good; it was divine. There was a head, a flavour, and, above all, a *body* about it, such as nobody had ever before known. News of this wonderful brew went like wildfire round the town, and all Zittau came to see—and to drink. Especially came Abbot Petrus and his monks; their ecstasies over this wonderful beer were unbounded, and often and often were their horns emptied and replenished. So great was the excitement that nobody missed Father Laurentius, and by nightfall the entire brew was consumed.

In the morning, at the bottom of the empty vat were found, to the inexpressible horror of every one, the bodies of Laurentius, Emil, and Barbara. Terrible was the consternation in Zittau; all who had drunk of the "maiden beer," as it was now called, were immediately taken ill, their heads became fearfully hot, their stomachs deathly cold, and those of them who had imbibed more than five quarts were seized with a mortal sickness and died in a few hours. Amongst these were the Abbot Petrus, and many of his monks. The convent brewery was deserted; everybody now took to the town's beer, and notwithstanding the sad fate of his son, the chief brewer gradually recovered his peace of mind. The strangest thing was that the inspector's rosewood bowl had totally disappeared, and though a thorough search was made for it, could nowhere be found. In vain the convent offered a reward. The new abbot said the brothers were poor, and could give neither silver nor gold, but they could offer something infinitely more valuable, and the fortunate and honest finder should have so many masses said hereafter, for the repose of his soul, as would diminish the duration of his purgatorial pains by

at least a hundred years. Even this tempting offer produced no effect, but though the bowl was never recovered the secret of its disappearance was at length revealed. An old friend of Emil's, staying late one night in the town brewhouse, had occasion to make a visit to the malt-room. The moon was at the full, illuming with yellow light the piled up malt, and showing to the astonished youth a crowd of the very smallest men and women he had ever seen in his life. And they were so curiously attired—girdles of hop leaves were twisted round their minute and graceful bodies, wreaths of hop blossom were twined in their flowing hair, and they carried hop branches in their tiny hands. Their shoes were of shining crystal, clasped with ruby buckles; and they danced merrily to the strains of fairy-like music, laughing right lustily the while, with voices that rung like the tinkling of crystal bells. As the beholder gazed at this wonderful sight, there advanced out of the shadow cast by heavy rafters, three figures. The first was clad in the garb of a Franciscan friar, the second was the pretty Barbara, the third Emil. The friar drew from the folds of his gown a rosewood bowl, care-

fully examined and tasted the malt, and then, beckoning to his companions and the fairy throng to follow him, descended the stairs to where stood a huge vat of almost fermented beer; this he also tasted, and, after tasting, solemnly blessed. Then he took Emil and the maiden by the hand, and all slowly melted into the golden moon beams.

Ever since, says the saga, the monk haunts all breweries; always on moonlight nights are his visits made. When he fails in his visit all goes wrong, but when he tastes the malt and blesses the brew the beer is good; except when brewers of depraved character water the beer *after* the blessing. To such wretches the malt monk never comes more; their beer remains unwholesome and unblest, and they are doomed in the next world perpetually to brew bad beer, and to drink their own brew.

# THE LOCKSMITH OF GÖRLITZ.

MANY years ago, there lived at Görlitz an honest locksmith — Martin Müller — whose family consisted of his wife, Marie, and an only child, a boy, whose name was Fritz.

One gloomy winter night as Martin was returning from his work, he fancied he saw a figure lying in the snow by the wayside, and thought he could hear the sobbing wail of an infant's voice. He went towards the spot whence the sound proceeded, and found the figure to be that of a woman recently dead, evidently some poor wanderer who had fallen exhausted on the ground and perished of the bitter cold; and whose last thought had plainly been to fold her ragged cloak round the babe, whose crying had attracted the locksmith's attention. He took the

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tiny creature in his strong arms, and covering it tenderly with his sheepskin coat, carried it to his cottage. The good Marie, who had room enough in her heart for a hundred children, was full of pity for the desolate orphan—a sweet little girl with rosy cheeks and curly hair, about half the age of her boy, then four years old—and she ministered to all the babe's wants, and pressed it to her bosom as lovingly as if it had been her very own. Martin then, with some of his neighbours, fetched the body of the poor mother and laid her in the dead-house. But no one claimed her, no clue to her identity was discovered, and after a few days she received Christian burial in the churchyard. As to the child, the question of adopting her was never so much as discussed between the locksmith and his wife; it seemed to their simple minds that Providence had bestowed her upon them by a direct gift, and they accepted the gift with grateful hearts. The babe was christened—or re-christened—for none knew whether or not she had already been baptized, and received the name of Marie, and her bright face and winning ways endeared her to everybody, and made her the light of the locksmith's house.

Three years afterwards Martin's household was again increased. A neighbour's house took fire in the night, and ere the sleeping family could be roused, they were enveloped in the fierce flames; all perished save one child, who was thrown by his frantic mother into the arms of the horrified and helpless spectators. Robert, for that was the name of the rescued boy, had not a single relative left in the world, and when Martin Müller came forward and offered to adopt him there was nobody to say nay, and the boy was taken home to Fritz and Marie. The three children grew up together like brothers and sister, and neither the locksmith nor his wife ever showed by their manner that Marie and Robert were less dear to them than Fritz. When the boys were old enough they were apprenticed to Martin's trade of locksmith, and nothing occurred to mar the even tenor of the family life, until the time arrived when the young locksmiths, having completed their term of apprenticeship, must, in accordance with a law of the town, set off on their three years' travel —an indispensable preliminary to settling either as workmen or masters in their native place.

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It was the month of May, the time evening, and in the shady corner of a pleasant garden full of apple-trees crowned with pink and white bloom, sat a youth and a maiden—he was tall and stalwart, blue-eyed and light-haired, and of a frank and open countenance; she was slender, graceful, and rosy-cheeked, her hair brown, her eyes bright and sparkling. The one was Fritz, the other Marie.

"We are going away in the morning, Marie, as thou knowest, on our long journey; and for three years we shall not see Görlitz and our dear old Lusatia nor the father and mother, nor thee, Marie!"

"Thou art young, Fritz, and three years will soon be gone."

"Who knows," continued, Fritz without heeding the girl's remark, "who knows if I shall ever see you again? Life is uncertain, and the Rhine country many days' journey! And mayhap, Marie, thou wilt be getting thyself a fine husband, and when I return to the old house I shall find thee wedded to the burgomaster's son or a young baron!"

"And mayhap," said Marie laughingly, "thou wilt bring with thee a fine wife from Rhineland; belike, a knight's daughter!"

"I would rather have thee than any knight's daughter between the Elbe and the Rhine!" answered Fritz passionately. "Oh, Marie! we have always been like sister and brother to each other, ever since that cold winter's night when the good father brought thee into our cottage and showed me thy dear bonny face. And now I cannot bear to leave thee without saying what is in my heart—how I love thee more than ever brother loved sister! Let us be betrothed now, Marie, ere I leave Görlitz and thee, and when I come back thou shalt be my dear, dear wife!"

"We are too young, and the father and mother might not be pleased—and—and—I am not quite sure that I love thee well enough to live with thee always!"

"But thou lovest not another?"

"No, Fritz, no! But to be a wife is not the same as being a sister, and I am not sure that I love thee well enough for that, and we are so young."

"But thou wilt be true, Marie? promise me not to love and wed another! promise to wait until I come back!"

"Freely do I promise, dear brother Fritz!" said

Marie, smiling through her tears, "and I promise, too, that not one hour whilst thou art away wilt thou be forgotten. But come! we must go into the house, our dear mother will want to have all she can of her boy's company to-night."

Thus speaking, she rose, and the two, walking hand in hand, slowly left the orchard. Scarcely had they disappeared when a young man emerged from the bushes behind the seat Marie and Fritz had just vacated. His face was dark and distorted with passion, and he muttered incoherently to himself, then he threw himself moodily on the ground, and remained motionless in the same position until he heard a voice calling "Robert! Robert!" whereon he rose quietly to his feet, and quitted the orchard unobserved.

The next morning, amid the tears of the little household, the foster-brothers left the roof that had so long sheltered them, and the kindly old couple, and the beautiful girl who loved them so well. It was difficult to tell who felt the parting most keenly; probably the mother and Fritz, whose grief seemed to be unusually deep and passionate. The latter could scarcely tear himself away, and when

last seen he was leaning sobbing on the arm of Robert.

The absence of the two youths made a great gap in the locksmith's family; the house did not look like the same. Martin was often gloomy and taciturn, his wife often in tears. All their plans were made with reference to the return of the wanderers, the words "When Fritz and Robert come back," were ever on their lips, and the time at which they might be expected was calculated almost to a day. Marie suppressed her own sorrow, and did all she could to support and console those who had been to her almost more than parents, and they often thanked heaven for having bestowed on them the best of daughters.

In the meantime the two young locksmiths were plodding slowly westwards, and after many days of weary travel they reached the rushing Rhine. Attracted by the beauty of the scenery, and the salubrity of the climate, Fritz resolved to remain in the neighbourhood of Coblentz, whilst Robert, anxious to go further and see more, shaped his course for France. Before they bade each other adieu, it was agreed that on Easter Monday, of the third year from their

parting, they should meet in a little inn between Zittau and Ostritz, and enter Görlitz and Martin Müller's house as they had left them, together.

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The time of exile, as Marie had predicted, flew rapidly by, and when the foster-brothers, each faithful to his appointment, met at the inn, it seemed only the other day that they had separated in Rhineland. Fritz was the same frank, open-hearted youth as ever; he had worked hard at his calling under different masters, saved some money, and never for a single hour had forgotten his father, and mother, and Marie. Neither had Robert forgotten Marie and home, but his character had nevertheless deteriorated; he had succumbed to the joint temptations of French wine and French gaiety, and he returned to Lusatia poorer almost than he had left it. The change for the worse in his character was plainly depicted in his face, and the joy of Fritz at the meeting with his friend, and at the prospect of so soon embracing his parents and Marie, alone prevented his noticing the difference in Robert's appearance.

The latter, as they walked homewards in the

twilight, was silent almost to gloom, but Fritz was so brimful of spirits that even had his companion been disposed to talk, he would scarcely have had opportunity of doing so. Not one of his thoughts did Fritz conceal; fully he opened his heart to him he deemed his friend—told him how he had heard that his father had grown weak and ailing; that he intended to take charge of the business himself, make Marie his wife, and his foster-brother his head man. To Robert all this was gall and bitterness, he too loved Marie, but he was poor, a common workman, only a foster-son; how could he hope to win her against such a rival as Fritz? And as to working for him; and being every day witness of his happiness!—perish the thought! and the idea of returning after his three years' absence with empty pockets, was almost more than his pride could bear. As his comrade danced along the road, waving his stick in the air, shouting and singing in the exuberance of his joy, evil thoughts came crowding into Robert's mind, every vestige of friendship, gratitude, duty, religion, was lost in the devouring whirlpool of his envy and jealousy; and out of its seething blackness there slowly emerged a red

and ghastly spectre—murder! and pointed its horrid finger at his foster-brother. What so easy and so safe? A few blows with his oaken stick—and then—and then—No! he would not do it, he really loved Fritz, they had always been friends, he would bear it all, he would not stain his hands with innocent blood.

"Come on, you loiterer! Why do you lag behind so? Did you find a sweetheart in France? No! Then we must find you one in Görlitz, so that we can both be married on the same day—Marie and I—and you, and who? I wonder! But I shall have the prettiest wife in all Görlitz; now don't you think I shall, Robert?"

A crushing blow on the temple from an oaken cudgel, a terrible cry, another blow, still another; and Robert with ghastly face bent over the dead body of his murdered friend.

*The hour of midnight sounded from the clock tower of St. Peter's church.*

A pit by the road side received poor Fritz's battered corpse, a pile of stones was heaped over it, and the murderer went on his way.

Robert was heartily welcomed by his foster-parents and by Marie, and many were the questions asked

about his travels, and his adventures in the country beyond the Rhine. He was taciturn and gloomy, and there was a strange, anxious, look in his face, attributed by every one to the fatigue he had undergone and to the illness he pleaded. That he had come home with a tolerably well filled purse was considered to be greatly to his credit, and he at once took his wonted place in the workshop of the old locksmith, upon whom time had begun to lay his heavy hand. It was thought strange that Robert had not met Fritz, and as day after day went by, and the latter did not appear, much surprise was felt and expressed, a feeling that at length deepened into alarm. For it is a long, long way from Rhineland to Lusatia, the times were dangerous and the roads unsafe, and it began to be feared that he had fallen ill by the way, or met with foul play. But hope is always strong, and Martin and his wife, though suffering deeply from suspense and disappointment, still believed that their son lived; and watched daily and hourly for his coming. No so Marie, she knew the nature of poor Fritz too well, believed too completely in the sincerity of his love for herself, to be able to cherish

any illusions; she felt in her heart that were he alive nothing would have kept him from her side, and from the arms of his parents. And she had had terrible dreams—dreams of a dark figure emerging from the forest through which Fritz journeyed, and striking him down with a sudden blow—of blood streaming from a ghastly wound—of a hasty burial in a lonesome grave—and of other horrors; and hope for the return of her lover perished from her soul. The behaviour of Robert at this time was admirable, his looks displayed his sorrow, he exerted himself to console his foster-parents, and made even long walks westward, to find out, if possible, what had become of Fritz; and he was never tired of inquiring amongst pedlars and wandering minstrels for news of the lost one. This conduct greatly endeared him to the old people, and they felt it an unspeakable consolation that Robert was still left to them. But Marie was more distrustful; she had penetrated the secret of Robert's love for herself, she knew he could scarcely fail to be aware that Fritz had been his successful rival, and though it never occurred to her to suppose he was in any way the cause of the latter's non-appearance, she had a

strong conviction that his continued absence, however arising, was not really disagreeable to Robert, a conviction that strengthened with time and further observation. As hope, even in the sanguine minds of the father and mother, faded gradually away, their bodily infirmities increased, and Fritz had not been laid a year in his stony grave by the roadside when Martin was carried to his long home in the churchyard.

The business naturally fell to Robert, who thus became a master locksmith. He no longer concealed his love for Marie, and though she gave him scant encouragement, and even refused him again and again, he almost, by his continued importunity, wore away her reluctance to accept him; and the very depression under which she laboured, owing to the disappearance, and, as she could not but think, the death of Fritz, weakened her powers of resistance. Robert's suit was favoured by the foster-mother, who was anxious before she finally quitted the scene—an event that she felt was near at hand—to see the "children," as she termed them, "settled." At last the poor girl gave up the unequal contest, and became the unwilling, unloving

wife of Robert. Her mistrust of his character and motives scarcely diminished. Shortly after the marriage, the good old locksmith's wife passed away, with the name of her lost son on her lips, and was laid by the side of her husband in the churchyard.

The first years of Marie's wedded life were more tolerable than she had expected. Her husband really loved her, and treated her kindly, although he saw clearly that his love was not returned, and that her heart was buried in the grave of her dead lover. As he grew older, the natural sternness of his character increased; he was often silent and moody, and by those who were about him he was regarded rather with fear than liking. He wrought hard at his business, and his business throve well with him, so that he became one of the most substantial citizens of Görlitz, and finally one of the fathers of the town. Marie bore him only one child—a son—whom, to his great but inarticulate annoyance, she insisted on calling Fritz. His professed, and often paraded, regard for the memory of his foster-brother prevented his objecting to the revival of a name that served constantly to remind him of his crime—a

name which he could scarcely, without secret agony, pronounce. So keenly did he feel this, that he came at last to hate the poor little boy, and it was almost with a sense of satisfaction that he watched the child's failing health; for the young Fritz was of a delicate and sickly constitution, and the devoted care and assiduous nursing of his mother alone kept him alive. The incessant anxiety in which she lived, and her constant watching, at length injured her health, and the once bright and blooming Marie grew pale, thin, and drooping, and began to wear an appearance of premature old age.

One dark night she watched by the bedside of her suffering son; he had sunk into an uneasy slumber. Near him the father, on his couch, was buried in a deep sleep, and, save the heavy beating of the rain on the diamond-paned windows, all was still. Marie's thoughts went back involuntarily, and almost insensibly, to the other Fritz. She thought of their last interview in the orchard, when he first confessed his love; of his doubts about the future, and his sad and mysterious fate—what had become of him?—was he really dead?—how had he died? Had she in marrying Robert been false to her

lover's memory?—could Robert— Her reflections were interrupted by an impetuous shout from Robert himself. He dreamt a terrible dream, and as he dreamt he talked,—

"O! you are very fortunate, Fritz. You have saved money, you will be master, you will be Marie's husband! whilst I!—I have nothing! I am a beggar, a poor locksmith, and must be your workman, your servant, and do your bidding! This night you will embrace your parents and Marie! Your wife will be the prettiest girl in Görlitz! No, by heaven!

* * * * * *

Dead! dead! I have killed my best friend, my brother; but Marie! Marie shall be mine!"

As Marie heard this terrible revelation, she trembled in every limb; heavy drops of perspiration stood on her brow; she gasped for breath. All was now clear to her. Fritz, her dear Fritz, her lover, had been murdered for love of her; and his murderer was her husband, the father of her child! And then, in her agony, she prayed that she and the boy might too be taken! She feared the moment of Robert's awakening; she dreaded having

to look on him, to speak to him, to touch him; and through the livelong night she sat still, motionless, like one petrified; and when morning at last came her face spoke horror, and her hair was as white as snow!

When her husband awoke and looked at her, the change in her appearance terrified him. He thought the boy was dead. He would have spoken to her, but she waved him away with an expression of loathing. The instinct of a guilty conscience told him the truth. Marie knew of his crime—how, he recked not; it was sufficient for him that she knew. A murderous look darkened his face. He approached close to her, and hissing in her ear, "One word and thou too diest!" rushed from the room.

Before nightfall one-half of Marie's prayer was answered. Little Fritz was taken away. He died as softly as a summer breeze, resting tranquilly in his mother's arms, and murmuring her name with his latest breath. Marie wept, but her tears were not tears of sorrow; and she laid herself down to die with a sense of relief, and almost of joy. In that better land beyond the grave, far away in the blue sky, she would meet the loved

ones who had gone before—her foster-father and mother, her boy, and Fritz; and as her conscience-stricken husband bent over his dying wife, he heard her, as she sunk quietly to rest, breathing their dear and honoured names.

Marie and her son were buried in the same grave.

As the officiating priest spoke the solemn words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, spirit to God," Robert felt that he was more than a treble murderer, and that sooner or later judgment would overtake him.

* * * * * *

It was nearly thirty years since the memorable evening on which the foster-brothers had walked together to Görlitz, and more than twenty since the death of Marie and her son. Robert had prospered in the world; his wealth had greatly increased, he had served the office of burgomaster, he had married again, and sons and daughters had been born to him. But the curse of his sin was upon him, he was not happy. His wife had a bitter temper and a razor-like tongue; his daughters were sickly, and his sons dissipated; his neighbours treated him

with outward respect, but held him in secret hatred, for his disposition was hard, and his manner stern; he unbent himself to no man, so that he had scarcely a friend even in his own household. He was, nevertheless, an eminently respectable member of society, and complied with all the external forms of religion, with the sole but notable exception that he never attended mass, an omission that was often remarked against him by the orthodox and the superstitious. On the other hand, he was unremittingly regular in his attendance, on Sundays and holidays, at the early morning service, held always at half-past five —from this he was rarely known to be absent.

The time was Easter; the winter had been long and severe; the weather was gloomy, and Robert had retired early to rest, as he wished to be present at the early morning preaching.

After sleeping, as he thought, several hours, he was suddenly aroused by hearing the clock of St. Peter's strike half-past five. Annoyed at having overslept himself, he hastily dressed and hurried to church; arrived there, he was greatly surprised to find all in darkness; no lights, no clerk, no priest, no worshippers. As he stood wonderingly at the

door the great clock in the tower above him struck again, and did not, as he expected, cease when the sixth hour had been sounded; slowly and solemnly it went on to twelve, and as the strokes rung through the midnight air, they fell like the strokes of fate on the murderer's soul. That very moment, thirty years before, he had shed his foster-brother's blood. For a few minutes he felt as if spell-bound, then uttering a cry of fear and anguish, fled over the yielding snow back to his house.

He went to his bed, but not to sleep; rest was no more for him; all the events of his life marshalled themselves in review before his feverish and aching eyes. The rescue from the fire; his adoption by the good locksmith and his wife; the happy days he had spent beneath their humble roof; his playmates and companions; his brother and sister, Fritz and Marie; the pleasant time of his youth, when care, greed, and remorse were alike strangers to his bosom—all passed before him. Then, he thought of his growing love for Marie; his journey with Fritz; the scenes he had witnessed in France; the meeting in the old inn; the last terrible walk to Görlitz; his evil thoughts on the way, and the cruel,

treacherous murder, at his hands, of his loving brother and true friend. Marie appeared to him as she was when alive, fresh and blooming as a spring morn; he stood with her at the altar, he heard her again, with trembling voice and downcast face, promise before God to be his wife; he saw her watching by the bedside of their dying son; saw the look of horror with which she regarded him; bent over her couch, as she gave up the ghost, murmuring with her dying lips the name of the beloved, betrayed, and murdered Fritz.

The hours dragged heavily on, but the wretched Robert could not free himself from the visions of the night. When morning at length came they still held him enchained; the call for morning service passed by unheeded, he remained on his couch as if stupefied, enchanted, and undone.

As he thus lay, there fell suddenly on his ear a sound as of the trampling of many feet, and the hum of many voices. The sounds came nearer and nearer, grew louder and louder; they entered his house; they crowded into his chamber, and in the name of the law and religion Robert Müller was arrested for—sacrilege!

During the previous night the church of St. Peter had been violently entered, and all the sacred eucharistic vessels broken and destroyed; footsteps through the snow had been traced to and from the locksmith's house; his antipathy to the mass was remembered, and as a heretic and blasphemer he was seized and haled to prison.

The crime of which Robert was accused was, in that superstitious age, a very serious one; the circumstantial evidence against him was reinforced by the general dislike in which he was held; he was brought before the judge, tried, and condemned to death. Then the stricken man fell on his knees, and declared that the hand of Heaven was upon him; that he was indeed innocent of sacrilege, but guilty of murder. And he confessed how, thirty years before, he had done to death his friend and foster-brother; told where the body might be found, in the old pit by the vineyard; and in what a wonderful way his sin had found him out.

As this terrible revelation was finished, men ran

to the old pit by the vineyard, raised the bones of poor Fritz from their unhallowed grave, and laid them in consecrated ground. And the same day Robert the murderer was beheaded in the market-place of Görlitz.

# THE DEVIL'S BLACKSMITH.

IT was winter in Görlitz; the earth was covered with hard frozen snow; the voices of river and stream were hushed in deadly cold; the forests were filled with fantastic shapes of white and lustrous crystal. The time was night, and bright stars gleamed overhead in a sky of deepest, darkest blue—all was still; and the strokes of Volprecht's hammer rung out loud and clear in the stagnant air; and the fiery iron, as he bent him to his midnight task, rained out showers of radiant sparks. For Volprecht had promised the Count Lothar's shield for the morn, and the good knight was bound on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre.

As the clocks were striking the hour of midnight the burly smith looked up from his work, and saw

standing in the doorway, a young man of strange aspect. Long red hair hung low down on his shoulders, and streamed about his face like a mane; he had only one eye—large and piercing, and black as night; his shoulders were immensely broad, his arms long and muscular, and he walked with a stick as if lame.

"What's your pleasure, mein Herr?" asked Volprecht.

"A supper and a night's lodging, an you will, master!"

"Whence come you, and what are you?"

"From the south, and I am a wandering blacksmith."

"A blacksmith! What sort of a craftsman are you? Here, take that big hammer and strike for me whilst I make this shield."

The stranger took the hammer and helped Volprecht so effectually that the shield was quickly finished, and the smith led him to his house and gave him food and a bed. In the morning he would fain have continued his journey, but the master-smith had been so much struck with his skill as a workman that he desired his services, and as there was

not much difficulty on the score of wages a bargain was soon struck, and Schwefel, that being his name, agreed to remain. He was a wonderful acquisition to Volprecht—was so strong and skilful indeed that, with scarcely any help from the two apprentices, he could do all the work that came into the forge. It made no difference what it was, he could turn his hand to anything. Shoeing a horse, mending a plough, forging sword or spear, or making a suit of armour, all were equally easy to him. But he would never do a job in or about the church. When anything went wrong with the bells or the organ, or new railings were wanted round a vault it always happened that Schwefel was too busy to take the work in hand, and the master must be sent for, at which he grumbled somewhat, but the new smith was too valuable to be quarrelled with, and no one ventured to find fault with him.

Now Volprecht was very fond of a song and a glass; he drank so much beer indeed that some people said he had swallowed one of his own sparks and occupied most of his time in trying to quench it at the "Three Palm-branches." At any rate he was almost constantly there, and appeared to have

given up his business entirely to his man Schwefel. Late one night, when he had drained his last tankard of beer and sung his last song, he bade adieu to his boon companions and staggered towards his home. As he neared the forge he heard the strokes of hammer on anvil, and saw the ruddy glow of the fire, and looked in to see what Schwefel was about. But Schwefel was not there, and whilst he watched the two apprentices a knight, riding a black horse, and wearing black armour, rode up to the door and inquired in a loud voice for the master smith.

"Here I am!" said Volprecht.

"Can you make me a suit of harness, master?"

"Certainly, your lordship; and better than any other smith hereabouts. Can I serve you?"

"What's your price?"

"A hundred gulden."

"And do you think you can have it ready in a week?"

"A week! If I could not make a suit of armour in three days I'd forfeit both body and soul," answered the master smith.

"A bargain!" exclaimed the black horseman. "If the harness be finished in three days exactly—listen!

the clock is just going twelve—I will pay you four times the price—four hundred gulden; if not, you forfeit body and soul."

Volprecht was rather staggered at the terms of the contract, but looking upon the affair rather as a joke, and being quite confident besides that he would have the harness ready in good time, laughingly accepted the knight's conditions, and took the hundred gulden offered as earnest.

"Now," said the stranger, "it only remains to have our compact put into writing and signed." And he took from his saddle-bags an ink-horn and a pen, and wrote rapidly a few lines on a piece of parchment. Just as he had finished writing he unfortunately upset his ink-horn, spilling the ink over the floor, so that there was not enough left for the smith's signature.

"Donnerwetter!" said the knight. "But we will easily get over that difficulty." And seizing the master smith's big hand, he slightly scratched the back of it with one of his long finger-nails, drawing thereby as much blood as sufficed for the making of Volprecht's sign-manual. Returning the parchment to his saddle-bag the horseman went on his way.

His last words were, "Three days hence, at midnight, I come for my armour."

Directly afterwards the head-man returned. Volprecht told him of the bargain he had just made.

"Can you easily have the armour ready in that time?" he asked.

"Can I? Yes, by to-morrow."

"Very well," said the smith, "better set to work on it to-morrow morning," and he troubled himself no further, spent the next two days at the "Three Palm-branches," and never once during the time called at the forge. It was quite enough for him to hear, now and again, the ring of Schwefel's hammer on the anvil, and to see the glittering sparks rushing out of the chimney.

On the morning of the third day, however, the recollection of his compact with the black knight entered suddenly into his mind, and a feeling of uneasiness and even fear crept over him.

"Pooh!" he said to himself, "Schwefel has finished the job long since. I won't bother myself," and he called on his companions for another song, and tried to drown his misgivings in foaming beer. But it was of no use; they refused to be drowned or

shaken off, and he felt himself constrained to go across to the smithy and ascertain if the harness were really ready.

It was all ready except one plate—an hour's work perhaps—but his apprentices told him that Schwefel had been absent since early morning, and they knew not whither he had gone. This piece of news greatly alarmed the master, and he threw off his coat, rolled up his shirt-sleeves, tied on his great leathern apron, and set earnestly about completing the knight's order. Soon he had a piece of iron red-hot, but at the first blow of the hammer it broke and flew into twenty pieces. To get another piece, to put it into the fire, to blow fiercely at the bellows, to have it out on the anvil, was only the work of a few minutes. He had scarcely made half a dozen strokes however, when the hammer-head flew off. Cursing his ill-luck, Volprecht sought a better tool; by the time he had found one his fire was out. No sooner had he relit it than he discovered a hole in the bellows, and several hours were lost before he was fairly at work with the second piece of iron. More fortunate than before he succeeded in bending the plate to its required shape and cutting it to the right size.

His task was now all but completed, so nearly completed that the weary and perspiring master smith thought he might run over to the "Three Palm-branches" and refresh himself with a stoup of beer. He was only a few minutes absent, but when he returned to the forge the plate had disappeared. High and low, up and down, in every corner of the smithy he sought it, but in vain; not a trace of it could he find. The last stroke of ten sounded from the clock tower of the church.

Terribly frightened, trembling and sweating from every pore, Volprecht had to begin his work anew.

Again the iron flew in pieces, again his hammer broke. The clock went eleven. The despairing smith felt himself already in the clutches of the Evil One, but rousing all his energy he seized another piece of iron and hammered away with all his might. Luck returned to him, the fire burnt up briskly, the bellows seemed to work of themselves, and the plastic metal, under his vigorous and well-directed blows, took rapidly the acquired form and size. Volprecht's spirits rose at every ring of his hammer on the anvil. Yet half an hour and he would have

fulfilled his compact with the black knight and be free of his diabolical bargain.

A sound from the church tower, a dark form at the door of the forge, a deep voice asking, "Is my suit of armour ready?"

"In a quarter of an hour, my lord knight; in fifteen minutes will all be finished."

"Too late! too late! Thou hast not kept thy bargain, and thy body and soul are forfeit!"

As he spoke those words, and as the last stroke of twelve died away in the midnight air, the floor of the forge opened, and smith, fire, anvil, bellows, armour, all descended into the earth. Ever since has Volprecht been condemned to work at his task in the nether world, and so must he go on working until the suit of harness is finished, but his hammer and his iron continue to break, his fire goes out, and ill-luck pursues him as before. And on quiet, stormless nights in autumn and at the hour of the new year, the sound of his hammer may still be heard deep down in the earth.

# THE QUERXIES' PRESENT.

QUERXIES, it is said, were once met with everywhere in Lusatia, but the place they especially favoured was the neighbourhood of Hugenwald. Querxies are little creatures—dwarfs—who used to live inside the mountains, and wander round about them; the entrances to their dwellings were called "querx-holes," and here and there many of them may still be seen. In Silesia there is one on the Prudelberg by Stousdorf; in Upper Lusatia there are several on the Dittersberg, near Schönau; some in Warnsdorf in Bohemia, and at the foot of the Broad Mountains by Zittau. In the neighbourhood of Zittau, and about the Bohemian frontier, these strange beings in olden times were quite at home, and any one who chose

to watch in concealment by the querx-holes, might see the little creatures go to and fro, sometimes all night long. They are supposed to have originally come out of the numerous "querx-wells," perennial springs of clear crystal water that greatly abound in these mountainous regions. The querxies have hoods, which possess the quality of rendering their wearers invisible, and these they put on when they go into the villages and peasants' houses to steal their food, a practice in which they often indulge. They have, however, a great abhorrence of carraway-seeds, and therefore people, in baking their bread, often put in it a few of these seeds, for such bread the querxies never touch.

Once upon a time, a farmer's wife in Lusatia was lying in her bed; by her side was a baby, who the day before had for the first time seen the light. The farmer and all the servants were out in the fields, and the good woman was alone in the house with her little one. Suddenly she heard a noise in one corner of the chamber, near the stove, where there appeared a small opening in the wall; out of this hole there advanced towards the bed a small grey man; he was exceedingly polite, walked hat in hand, and bowed

often and deeply. He begged to be allowed, with his companions, to partake of a banquet in the chamber, and in return for the favour promised the gratitude of the entire body of querxies.

The farmer's wife, whose curiosity overcame all the misgivings she might have as to the result of this strange proceeding, granted the wished-for permission; whereon the small grey man, profusely and earnestly expressing his thanks, retired. Directly afterwards a noise much louder than the first was heard, and the querxey returned at the head of a crowd of little men dressed exactly like himself, all in grey. They brought with them tables, chairs, a basket full of all sorts of food and wine, and in a few minutes every preparation had been made for a luxurious banquet. Music was heard in the distance; the sound approached nearer and nearer, until there emerged from the wall a band of fiddlers and fifers dressed in bright uniform. The banquet then began, and proceeded to the accompaniment of the sweetest music to which the farmer's wife had ever listened. When it was over the tables were removed and the room cleared for a dance. The band struck up a lively air, the querxies rose from their seats, and

the dance was just beginning, when a new querxey rushed into the chamber, his hands raised above his head, and showing in his face signs of great distress: he exclaimed in a loud voice,—

> "Oh, woe the day, oh, woe the day!
> Old mother Pump has pass'd away!"

For a moment the little men seemed thunderstruck; then getting their things together—their chairs, their tables, and the remnants of the feast, they vanished rapidly and tumultuously through the hole in the wall.

Only one of them, a querxey who had the appearance of being master of the ceremonies, remained behind for a few minutes; he went up to the farmer's wife, and after telling her that the sudden death of the mother of their race had overwhelmed him and his companions with sorrow, thanked her impressively for her kindness, and in acknowledgment of querxey gratitude, presented her with three gifts—a golden ring, a silver bowl, and a loaf of maize bread.

Those three things, said the querxey, were of great

value and importance; for so long as they all remained in the family, luck would attend it; the farmer and his descendants would acquire vast wealth, and become happy and famous. But the gifts must be carefully preserved in a secure and suitable place, and ever remain heirlooms in the family. The ring, however, must always be worn by the wife of the eldest son. Hereupon the little master of the ceremonies again thanked the farmer's wife, and followed his companions through the hole in the wall, which immediately closed up, leaving no trace behind.

The good woman felt as if she were awaking from a dream; indeed, had it not been that the three presents lay before her on the bed, she would have regarded the entire circumstance as being actually a dream, or the distempered fancy of a sick woman.

When she told her husband what had happened, and showed him the silver bowl, the golden ring, and the loaf, he called together all the members of his family to discuss what should be done to preserve these highly important gifts; that were to bring so much happiness and wealth to them all.

It was decided to build a strong tower, inside

which, enclosed in an iron chest, the silver bowl and the maize should be always kept, so that nobody might have it in his power to fetch them away. This was done, and the ring was worn as the querxey had directed.

The little man's words proved true, the farmer and his wife became great people, and left to their children silver and gold, flocks and herds, meadows and pasture lands. And the family waxed ever more powerful, and were fortunate for many generations. But, as it often happens, luck that comes on the wing flies away again; and one day the wearer of the gold ring was so incautious as to lose it, and although no effort was spared to find it, the treasure was lost for ever.

Now were the family in great tribulation, and feared much the anger of the beings to whom they owed such a long career of prosperity and happiness. And not without cause; for one night there came a terrible thunderstorm, and a stroke of lightning rent from top to bottom the old tower, the bulwark of their fortunes.

The words of the querxey, the bringer of the luck-bearing gifts, were literally accomplished; the

prosperity of the farmer's descendants endured, and even increased, only so long as the three presents were preserved; from the very day of the loss of the ring it began visibly to decline, and in another generation the family were just as poor as at the time of the querxies' visit to the farmer's wife and her new-born babe.

# THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

MANY years ago there lived at Budissin (Bautzen) a stocking-weaver of the name of Paul Nicolai, and his wife Gertrude. They had six children—three boys, black-haired and light-eyed, like their mother; and three girls, chestnut-haired and blue-eyed, like their father. They were very poor, for the country was disturbed by war, and money and work were alike scarce; but not unhappy, because they all helped and loved each other. It often happened that the children were obliged to go short of food, but they never complained and were never downcast; the girls helped their mother in the house, the boys went away into the forest and brought home firewood; and during summer and autumn they gathered whimberries, blackberries,

nd cranberries, which they sold in the town, and did odd jobs for the farmers, and so helped their father to provide food for themselves and their sisters. Winter was the worst season for the weaver's family; everything was then dearer, and work was scarcer than at any other time of the year. It was very nearly Christmas, and though Paul had worked very hard, and made many long journeys, trying to sell the produce of his loom, he had met with scant success—had, indeed, earned barely enough to keep the wolf from the door—and did not see the least chance of being able to give his wife and children the little treat, at the merriest time of the year, on which he had set his heart. It would be so hard for them, he thought, to see the beautiful Christmas trees being carried to the neighbours' houses; and to look in the shop-windows at the pretty toys, lamps, and ornaments that were to adorn the trees on Christmas eve; to hear of the good cheer and the feasting that would be going on everywhere; and to feel all the time that none of these pleasures were for them, possibly even to suffer from the pangs of hunger. His delight may therefore be imagined when, twelve days before

Christmas, he received from a merchant at Görlitz an order for as many stockings as he could weave by the day before Christmas. How he hurried back to Budissin, how he called the children together and told them the good news, how he promised them a Christmas tree and a Christmas dinner, and how they shouted for joy, need not be told. Neither is there need to tell how the good Paul during the next ten days worked, how he scarcely either ate or slept, so anxious was he to have a good sackful of stockings to carry to Görlitz. At length the appointed day came, and, promising his children that he would bring back with him a pocketful of toys, and a goose in his bag for the dinner, if he could buy one cheap, and telling the boys to fetch from the forest a tall fir-branch for a Christmas tree, Paul started on his journey. Snow was lying thick and hard on the ground, the sky was clear and blue, the air keen and frosty, and though the weaver's burden was heavy, he was so pre-occupied in reckoning up how much money he should have to draw for his work, and in thinking how the dear children would enjoy the fun they were going to have, that it never occurred to him to be tired, and

he never stopped on his way but once, to inquire the price of a fine fat goose he saw in a farmyard, and which the good farmer, seeing Paul was a poor man, offered to sell him very cheap.

"Good!" said Paul, "the price is reasonable; I shall have money in my pocket as I return, and I will call for Frau Goose, and take her home with me. Won't they be delighted?"

And he pushed on as if he were walking for a wager. Arrived at Görlitz, he went direct to the house of the merchant from whom he had received the order, and found, to his inexpressible horror and grief, that he had left home an hour before, and his clerk had to tell Paul he must come for his money on the third day following. In vain the poor weaver begged for something, for a part only of what was due to him; but the clerk was immoveable, he could only do as his master had told him—besides, he had no money. Paul inquired whither the Herr Merchant had gone, he would follow him; he must have a little money to buy bread for his children. That was "impossible, out of the question," said the clerk; the master had ridden away on a swift horse, and could not be overtaken.

There was no help for it then, so the weaver threw his empty sack over his shoulders; and, with a sad heart, and faint and weary steps, turned his face towards Budissin. He thought of the disappointment of the dear children when he should arrive at home without a single present, when he should have to tell them they must not alone deny themselves the longed-for Christmas tree, but go supperless to bed, and spend a hungry, dinnerless, cheerless Christmas day. In his sorrow he quite forgot his own hunger and fatigue, tears filled his eyes; and he almost groaned as he pictured to himself the six bright, eager, expectant faces, all listening intently for his footstep, all rushing to open the door for him, crowding up to him, and asking what he had brought for the Christmas tree. How could he muster up courage to tell them he had brought nothing? Full of these unhappy thoughts, he scarcely noticed that evening was fast closing over him, or that he had entered a thick wood, until he was roused, and his attention excited, by a number of bright lights amongst the trees at some distance from the path. Wondering greatly at such an unusual occurrence, he left the road, and walked

rapidly in the direction of the light until he came to a glade in the forest, where he found scores of tiny lanterns hanging on the trees, suspended from whose branches were hundreds of apples, pears, nuts, almonds, cakes, and toys. As he gazed in bewildered astonishment at this strange sight, a small gentleman—the least he had ever in his life seen—came up to him. He was clad in the most elegant and costly furs, wore high red boots, and his cap was formed of the skin of a white mouse. In height he was not above a foot, and his appearance was so singular that Paul did not know whether to laugh or be afraid. Said the little man,—

"You are the weaver from Budissin, you are tired and hungry, and very unhappy that you have nothing to take home to your children for the Christmas tree. And very nice children they are, I must say, particularly the young ladies!"

The weaver had never before heard his little girls called young ladies, so he took off his hat and thanked the small gentleman for his politeness.

"The first thing," said the latter, "is to give you something that will help you on the way, for your

sack will be full and heavy. After that, I will see what I can do for the children."

So saying, he led the way to a small, but elegantly arranged booth, constructed entirely of oak bark, and fir branches. Inside the booth was a small fire of turf, a small table covered with an exceedingly white cloth, and a chair made of the root of a tree. On the table stood a bottle of wine, and a covered plate, from which proceeded a most appetizing odour.

"Eat!" ordered the little man, pointing to the table.

Poor Paul, though sorely puzzled, did not need a second invitation. He uncovered the plate, and though he could not tell what the dish was, except that it had a strong flavour of hare and mushrooms, he thought he had never tasted anything so good in all his life.

"Drink!" said the little man, pointing to the bottle. Paul uncorked the bottle, poured out a glass of the ruby wine, raised it to his lips, and was just going to drink it off when an idea seemed to strike him.

"Will you kindly tell me your name, mein Herr," he asked, "that I may drink to your health?"

"Drink to those at home first, and then I will tell you my name."

Gladly Paul drank the health of his dear Gertrude, and their six little ones.

"Now you may drink to me," said the strange little man, smiling with a grave air; "my name is Count Carl Kinderfreund."

Paul drank the Count's health, wished him a merry Christmas, and thanked him with great heartiness for his hospitality.

"Now," asked Count Carl, when the weaver had finished his repast, "can you carry something in that sack of yours?"

Paul thought he could.

"Come along, then," said he, leading the way into the glade.

"Put as many of these," pointing to the things on the trees, "into the sack as it will hold, and if you will let me advise you, you will take principally apples and pears."

The weaver did as he was told, and loaded his sack to bursting with all the good things he found hanging on the branches, and, acting on the kind Count's advice, chose a great many apples and pears.

When he had quite finished this work, and had hoisted his burden on his back, Count Carl Kinderfreund addressed to him a few parting words.

"Take care of what you have got, Paul Nicolai, and make good use of what you have got, and ever remember that the reward you are now receiving, and which will, I hope, make you forget all your troubles, is given to you and your wife, and your children, because you have always been good and kind one to another; because you have borne your hard lives patiently, and have never repined, even under cold and hunger, or been discontented with your lot."

As the last of these words fell from the Count's lips, the lights went out; he disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, and Paul was left alone with his sack. With some difficulty he found his way back into the road, and trudged along towards Budissin as briskly and gladly as an hour before he had walked gloomily and slowly. His burden was heavy, but his heart was light, and he was so pleased at having so many things for the children, that he did not in the least mind the weight, although it

seemed every moment to increase. But as he arrived in the outskirts of Budissin, he really could not carry the sack a yard further, and was glad to call on a passer-by to help him. After a little while it became too heavy for even the two, and Paul must call upon another passer-by to give him a lift. Still this strange sack was too heavy, three men were unable to carry it, and Paul was fain to beg the help of a third wayfarer. With very hard work indeed, the four men at last managed to carry the sack into Paul's house.

Gertrude and the three boys and the three girls were on the tip-toe of expectation and excitement. "What have you brought, what have you brought, father dear?" exclaimed they all. "It must be something very good to require four of you to carry."

"Come and see, come and see!" cried the happy Paul. "Nuts, cakes, apples, pears, toys. Come and see!"

The kindly helpers were dismissed, the sack was opened. Nuts, and cakes, and toys, there were in plenty, but the apples and pears had turned into gold and silver money. At first all were speechless

with astonishment, then there was a tremendous shout of joy, as every one, Paul, Gertrude, and the six children, plunged their hands and arms into the glittering heap. Paul had to tell of his adventure with Count Carl Kinderfreund, and he did not forget what the kind little gentleman had said about making good use of his present, and he told the children that if they wanted this treasure to be blessed to them, and their good luck to continue, the very first use they made of the money must be to try to make happy some of those who were less fortunate than themselves. And so they did, they bestowed immediately part of their new wealth in charity, and on Christmas day they gave twenty poor children, who would otherwise have gone dinnerless to bed, such a feast as they did not forget for a year.

Paul used the fairy-given wealth so wisely, that he himself became a master stocking-maker, a rich merchant, and finally burgomaster of Budissin, but in his prosperity he lost none of those virtues to which he owed his elevation. He and his wife, his children, and his grandchildren, always strove to be kind and loving one to another, and he never

omitted an opportunity of helping deserving unfortunates who had not been lucky enough to make the acquaintance of Count Carl Kinderfreund.

# THE ELFIN SABBATH.

THERE was not in all the country round a prettier or a pleasanter girl than Helena, the quarryman's only daughter. Her face was always bright and sunny, she had a nod and a smile for everybody, and though her father and mother were poor, and lived in a small thatched cottage in the outskirts of the village, and she had to work hard every day, she was never discontented, and generally merry. People said this was because she had been born at a lucky time, on a Christmas day, one too that happened to be also a Sunday. Now children born on Sundays and holidays have often, as everybody knows, gifts bestowed on them not possessed by ordinary children. They can see spirits, ghosts, and fairies, when no one else can, talk with them, and even under favour-

able circumstances become quite intimate with those mysterious creatures. But Helena was eighteen years old before anything out of the common way happened to her, and her luck had not brought her anything beyond good looks and good spirits, and with these she was quite satisfied and thankful. Yet she had one great trouble. Many a young fellow, attracted by her bonny face and sweet temper, had sought to win her love, but she had turned a deaf ear to all, except Otto the carpenter, as fine and as handsome a young bachelor as well could be. Not his looks, however, but his goodness had touched Helena's heart. He had a father and a mother who were very infirm —the father indeed was bedridden—and a poor crippled sister, all of whom he supported by his labour; and he treated them so kindly and lovingly, and worked so hard for them, and was so cheerful and manly withal, that Helena could not help loving him, and but for her father's opposition they would have been long since betrothed.

Andrew, so was the quarryman called, was ill-pleased that his daughter had turned away so many well-to-do young men, to take up with a poor carpenter like Otto, every groschen of whose earnings

was required to support his parents and sister. Andrew was very fond and proud of his pretty daughter, and anxious that she should, if possible, marry somewhat above her station, and have an easier life than he and her mother had known. And there was such a capital chance for her too; it seemed, thought Andrew, almost a sin to throw it away. Old Peter Schwartz's son, Klaus, was over head and ears in love with Helena. Peter was innkeeper and farmer in a village three miles away in the mountains people said; quite rich, and was, moreover, disposed to favour the match, he had indeed, spoken to the quarryman about his son and Helena.

"Our Klaus," said he to him one day, "wants your daughter, Andrew, and though I think with his prospects, he might very well look higher, yet Helena is such a good girl that I have told him he may please himself; so I expect he will try to court her, and if they buckle to, as I have no doubt they will, I'll see to starting them in life, Andrew; leave that to me. But Klaus, you see, though very quiet and steady, is not quite so sharp or so ready with his tongue as some young fellows, and is terribly shame-faced into the bargain; so will you

just give the lad a helping hand, and tell Helena to speak to him kindly!"

Andrew gladly agreed to do this, and promised to use all his influence to insure Klaus a favourable reception.

When Helena heard what her father had done she was greatly distressed, for though she so far deferred to her father's wish as to refrain from betrothing herself to Otto, it was quite a different matter when he wanted her to marry another, for she loved the carpenter, and if she could not have the man she loved she was at least determined to have nobody else. Besides, her father had once said that if Otto could show him that he had put by ten gold ducats to begin housekeeping with, he would probably give his consent to their marrying. Now, though this was an almost impossible sum for the young folks ever to dream of possessing, and the condition was really equivalent to an entire prohibition, they still cherished a faint hope that by a stroke of luck, or perhaps by dint of hard and long-continued saving and working, the ten ducats might one day be theirs. Helena reminded her father of this promise.

"No! a promise it was not," answered Andrew; "I said if Otto would bring me ten ducats, as proof that he had so much to set up house with, I would consider about giving my consent. Since then I have changed my mind, however. Klaus Schwartz is a better bargain than the carpenter, even if he had a hundred ducats. I would like thee to have Klaus, but I will not force thee, child; at the same time, I say it is my wish, and when he comes here he must be treated civilly and kindly—that much I have promised old Peter."

"Do I ever treat anybody unkindly, father dear? And wouldst thou really like me to wed such a fat, ugly, stupid little wretch as Klaus?" For the first time in her life Helena was beginning to dislike somebody.

"He is not so stupid as he looks, only a bit shy. That will wear off. And as to his being fat and ugly, that is nothing, thou'lt get used to it in time; and the father will set him up, and I am sure you'll be very happy and comfortable, and I want to see thee comfortable, my child."

"What is the use of being comfortable if you

are not happy? And is there no chance for poor Otto, father? He is so good and so true, I can never, never love anybody else!" And two great round pearly tears trickled down the girl's rosy cheeks.

Andrew was rather perplexed; his daughter's distress was painful to him, he could not yield to her wishes concerning the carpenter, and at the same time was not hard-hearted enough to extinguish all hope, so he offered a compromise.

"I'll tell thee what I'll do, Helena," he said. "Let Otto show me twenty ducats of his own money honestly come by, and you may be betrothed the very same day!"

"Twenty ducats! father; that will never be. Why, there is hardly so much gold in all the village!"

"I don't know, one cannot tell what may happen, thou wast born on a lucky day thou knows; mayhap the fairies will help you!" And the quarryman laughed; he did not believe much in fairies.

When Helena told her lover of this conversation he became very despondent, for if ten ducats was an almost impossible sum, twenty were beyond the

very pale of hope; scarcely any one they knew had in all his life even seen so much gold. But they were both blessed with sanguine and cheerful dispositions; they had faith in each other's constancy, they were young and could wait, something would happen, and altogether they felt there was no reason why they should despair; they even made fun about Klaus Schwartz, and had a hearty laugh at the idea of his courting either Helena or any other girl. The notion of the little fat man being in love was so irresistibly comic that they could not contain themselves, and the interview so gloomily begun had quite a merry termination.

Klaus was not long in beginning his courting, and he visited the quarryman's cottage at least twice every week. Little over five feet in height he was very fat and round—had a double chin, a fat, rather long face, a small mouth, a large nose, and projecting upper lip, which, together with his extremely blue eyes, and heavy eyelids, gave him a peculiarly calf-like aspect. He had little beard and no whisker, and his light fluffy hair was brushed straight up on his head, until it resembled the ridge of a house. Whatever other faults Klaus might have, he cer-

tainly did not talk too much—as to his courting, he performed that with his eyes.

As he entered the quarryman's cottage, he would salute the inmates one after the other in the same words: "Good evening; I hope I see you well!" but with Helen he made a distinction: "Good evening, my Fräulein; I hope I see you very well!"

Then, in response to the invitation of the quarryman, or his wife, Klaus would take a seat, and remain the whole evening without saying another word, until it was time for him to go, staring all the while with his big vacant eyes at Helena, and following her every movement. She found this silent admiration very trying; it made her quite uncomfortable to be constantly looked at in that way, and always silently. When the enamoured youth rose to take his leave, he always used the same form of words: "May you sleep well!" and to Helena: "May you sleep very well, my Fräulein!"

Klaus was full of a dull, stupid form of conceit, and in his slow ruminative mind had quite determined that himself, and his style of wooing, were altogether irresistible; he was in no hurry, for he

felt that in the end Helena would fall into his arms like a ripe plum.

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Andrew was working in the old stone quarry on the other side of the Sonnenberg, and one bright morning in spring Helena was taking her father his breakfast. The Sonnenberg was a breezy, heath-clad hill, dotted here and there with green and sparkling meadows, and two or three picturesque villages, with their old, ivy-clad churches, clung to its steep sides. Over the very top of the Sonnenberg no one liked to pass when the light of sun or moon shone on it, for the place was a favourite resort of the "good people," whom to disturb was to bring ill-luck. But on this particular morning Helena was too full of other thoughts to bestow much heed on fairies. Work was slack with her father, money was scarce in the cottage, and he had been urging her to give Klaus more encouragement, to make up her mind to accept him; she feared he would renew the disagreeable subject when she took him his breakfast, and with the dread of this before her, and, thinking of Otto and their rather hopeless love, she became quite low-spirited, and as she

reached the summit of the Sonnenberg, was so full of trouble that she began to weep. Quite heedless of the wild and beautiful prospect around her, she walked with bent head slowly onward. Suddenly she stopped; a bright object glistening in the grass had caught her eye; she picked it up. It was a little bell-flower, the so-called "elfin's hat," and hanging outside it was the tiniest, most exquisitely worked silver bell that could possibly be conceived. "Who can have made it?" was Helena's wondering exclamation, at the same time shaking the pretty little thing, which gave forth a clear, tinkling musical ring.

"What desire you, Helena?" asked a sweet voice, low, silvery, and distinct, and looking down, she saw before her the most charming little creature her eyes had ever beheld — a sprite, a fairy gentleman, attired in the graceful costume of old Spain. He was not above six inches in height, but exquisitely proportioned; his eyes were dark and bright, his face handsome, intelligent, and animated; his beautiful hair glanced in the sunlight as if it were made of filiments of pearls, and his attitude, as he repeated his question to the astonished maiden, was grace itself.

"What desire you, Helena?"

"But who are you?"

"By your leave, I am your servant, maiden," answered the little gentleman, with a low bow. "My people and I have long known you; we know of your unhappiness, and because you have a good heart, and merry, and love the fresh air, flowers, and sunlight, and because you were born on a Christmas day, I am deputed by my people to make you happy, if you are agreeable on your part to confer on them a great favour."

"I don't know you; dear, strange little creature, who are your people, and where are they?"

"Tish! that is a question I cannot answer. Besides, it is not polite to want to know the why and the wherefore of everything, and to ask so many questions. Trust me! I pledge the word of a true cavalier to the honesty of my offer. Will you for a just equivalent do me a great service?"

"Dear little one!" answered Helena. "I am not distrustful; but I am so unhappy this morning that I scarcely know what I say. Don't jest with me, please. If you are a ghost, have pity on me, and let me go quietly on my way. My father waits for me, and his poor breakfast in the basket here will spoil."

"Nonsense! Your father is fast asleep under the rocks, and makes the ferns dance with his snoring. The breakfast will not spoil. That you may be sure I am in earnest, I leave my hat, which you have there in your hand, as a pledge of my truth. But decide quickly, for my time is short."

"I agree; only tell me your name, and what I am to do."

"I am the Lord Dewdrop," answered the elf in a joyful voice. "Now listen! In a week, on the evening of Whit Sunday, as you call the day, when the moon shines on this green knoll, meet me here. Ring with the little silver bell there in my hat, and I will answer your call. Have no fear; nothing but good will happen to you, and you will never regret having pleasured the good people."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when the ground on which he stood seemed to turn into liquid gold, beneath which he quickly sank from view. The conversation had not occupied many minutes, and Helena, on going to her father, found him, as the sprite had told her, snoring loudly under the shade of the rocks in the old quarry. He said nothing to her about Klaus Schwartz, and was

so unusually kind in his manner that she began to think her friends the fairies were already bringing her luck.

As she returned homeward, Otto overtook her—another stroke of luck. She related to him her adventure with the elfin cavalier. When he heard of the appointment Helena had made, he was greatly alarmed, for terrible tales were told of the pranks played by kobolds, gnomes, phantoms, and like beings, on unwary or over-confiding mortals; he feared mischief would happen to Helena, and endeavoured to dissuade her from ever again going near the Sonnenberg unaccompanied, and especially on Whit Sunday night. But she expressed herself quite determined to keep her word whatever happened, and altogether refused to share in Otto's fears as to any danger that might come to her from her intercourse with the "good people." "At least promise me one thing," said Otto; "go to thy aunt Lene; she is the wisest woman in these parts, and knows all about kobolds, ghosts, and the world of fairies; thou needest not, unless it please thee, tell her of having met this Lord Dewdrop; but in any case, she will give thee right good counsel. On

Whit Sunday evening I will be on the Sonnenberg, and if sprite or any other being attempt to harm a hair of thy head I will break his neck for him, though I die the next moment."

Helena agreed quite willingly to see and talk to her aunt, of whom she was very fond, and the lovers bid each other a tender adieu.

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Pattie Lene lived by herself in a rude cottage on the outskirts of the forest; a wide, sparkling brook, whose pleasant murmur was music in her ear, ran past her door; a strip of green turf extended down to the water's edge, and the opposite bank, high and precipitous, was crowned with tall ferns and noble beech-trees. The old woman dearly loved her woodland home and her solitary life, and would not have exchanged them for the finest house in Zittau. She supported herself by her spinning-wheel, her loom, and from the produce of her small garden. Her visitors were few, for she liked best to commune with her own thoughts, but she was very fond of her niece Helena; she liked her sweet, bonny face, and appreciated the girl's genuine nature and pure heart, and saw her always with sincere pleasure.

When Helena tripped up to the cottage-door, her aunt was busy at her spinning-wheel, enjoying the fresh air, and the pleasant sunshine of a warm spring day.

"I am glad to see thee, child; take a seat near me, and let us talk. How are the father and mother? Well? But thou lookest thoughtful, Helena; can the old aunt help thee with her counsel?"

"They say you are very wise, aunt, and know a great many things. I want you to tell me all about the 'good people.'"

"The 'good people' are not to be lightly talked of," said Pattie Lene, looking grave. "Dost thou ask out of idle curiosity, Helena, or for some graver reason?"

"Not out of curiosity, aunt dear."

"Ah! I think I understand. Thou art a 'Sunday child,' and Whitsuntide is near; maybe the 'good people' will bring thee luck. If they speak to thee, child, be sure to do what they ask, or worse will befall."

"But what are they? where do they come from?"

"Well, some people say they are Jews."

"Jews!" interrupted Helena. "Gott im Himmel, Jews!"

"Because they are so fond of gold and silver and precious stones. It is said, too, they often make rich presents to new-born children, but only to such as are remarkable for their beauty; that they play all sorts of roguish tricks, particularly on those who speak evil of them, or are unkind to their favourites. such as good 'Sunday-born children.'"

"Think you they are Jews, aunt?"

"No! I think they come from heaven!"

"From heaven! Why did the poor foolish creatures not stop there? It is surely a better place than the Sonnenberg!"

"Listen, my child, and I will tell thee. Thousands and thousands of years since the 'good people' were in heaven; they belonged to the company of angels, were tall and stately, and went about in shining robes, and sat at God's right hand. But the captain of the angels was angry, and dissatisfied with the government of heaven, and by his subtle tongue won over a whole legion of angels to join in a rebellion against the Lord of heaven and earth. It happened to him as happens to most rebels. He failed, and the great God took him by the hair of his head, hurled him from high heaven into the deepest

and darkest depths of hell, and threw his followers after him. Amongst these were many who were not really in their hearts wicked and bad. They had been over-persuaded by the angel-captain, and took part in the rebellion sadly and unwillingly. In hell they repented sorely of what they had done, and sent up petitions to God for pardon from their sin and release from their sufferings. He heard their prayer, and rescued them from the claws of Satan. But as they were no longer worthy to dwell in heaven, the Lord banished them to earth, under which, and in the air, and amongst the hills and rocks, they were allowed to live. As they fell from on high, a wonderful change came over them. Their faces and beautiful appearance remained the same; but they were shorn of their grandeur and their noble stature, and became little creatures of only a few inches in height. They are permitted to roam the world as they list—have much power; and if they behave well will again, on the last day, be received into heaven. They love to wander on the mountain-tops, in green meadows, and by running waters. Every fifty or hundred years, on Whit Sunday evening, they hold their Sabbath; but

unless they can persuade a mortal of pure heart and sinless life, born on a Sunday, to be present at their worship, it is not acceptable to God. Fortunate is the mortal they choose, if he disappoint them not!"

"Do you know anybody, aunt, who has been asked by the good people to their sabbath?"

"I do, child, to my sorrow. Many, many years since I promised to meet one of them on the Sonnenberg, and my sweetheart—for I had a sweetheart once, Helena, old as I look—persuaded me not to go, so I broke my word. For long afterwards I had nothing but ill-luck; my sweetheart deserted me, my parents fell ill, and nothing prospered that I attempted. Only since I came to live here have I made my peace with the elfin-world; they know how bitterly I regret having offended them, and now they not alone leave me in peace, but are even quite friendly. So if thou wouldst be happy, Helena, always speak well of the 'good people,' and keep thy word with them."

This conversation with Pattie Lene was very pleasing to Helena; she went home singing merrily, and during the week was almost too impatient to wait until Whit Sunday; and often, every day, she

looked if the little bell-flower, Lord Dewdrop's hat, were quite secure.

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The longed-for day at length arrived, and when evening came, and the moon began to shine, Helena commenced her ascent of the Sonnenberg. As Klaus Schwartz was expected, she had found much difficulty in getting out; only on condition of being quickly back, had her father allowed her to go for a short walk. As she climbed the hill, she saw a dark figure in the distance behind her; she recognized Otto, but fearful of an attempt to turn her from her purpose, she hurried on without waiting to speak to him.

Helena was on the mountain-top; the moon shone full and clear in a sky of cloudless purple; she drew from her bosom the silver bell, which, as it trembled in her hand, rung out a single note, loud and sweet. The long grass swayed to and fro, something glanced brightly in the moonlight, and the elfin lord stood, hat in hand, before her. His coat was fashioned from the blue wings of a butterfly, he wore a deep lace collar of finest white gauze, and each of his shoes was formed of a single diamond.

"Now, Miss Bashful," he whispered, in his flute-like voice, "have you resolved to go with me? Give me back the pledge; we have no time to lose."

Helena handed him the bell-flower; the fairy took it in his tiny, alabaster-white hand, swung it three times round his beautiful head, and threw it on the ground. Immediately the flower became a fairy skiff, with prow, rudder, mast, and white silken sails, but not larger altogether than a lady's slipper. In this wonderful craft Lord Dewdrop took his place as steersman, inviting Helena to place herself beside him.

"Get into that thing?" she exclaimed. "Why, it will not hold both my feet; besides, it is as light as woven air, and were I to tread on it would go out entirely."

"Don't make foolish remarks, you little Helena, but get in. On the honour of a cavalier, and as I hope to be saved, I could take you in this skiff half round the world in less than no time!"

Thus encouraged, Helena ventured to touch the fragile vessel with her foot; it increased rapidly in size; she put both her feet in it; still larger grew the wonderful boat; it reached to her shoulders, it

enveloped her whole body; she sat down opposite the pilot. The earth opened beneath them, and they were wafted through the darkness with such lightning-like swiftness, that Helena lost consciousness, and sank into a profound slumber.

She was roused by the singing of birds and the sound of running water; she opened her eyes; the fairy skiff was floating smoothly and rapidly down a noble river. Over head was neither sky nor sun, but four glorious moons, two of which were full and two crescent, steeped the scene in a soft and golden light. The banks of the river were clothed with noble forest-trees, and adorned with lovely gardens; birds of gorgeous plumage poured forth floods of melody and song; dolphins sported in the stream, mermaids sat on the rocks, and deep down in the crystal water Helena could see graceful ferns and masses of red and white coral, amongst which darted shoals of gold and silver fish. As they went further the river widened into a lake, studded with an archipelago of verdant islands, covered with drooping palms, and trees laden with rich and golden fruit; and the balmy air was fragrant with the perfume of roses. Hundreds of skiffs, with their tiny silken

sails, were bending to the zephyr-like breeze, and their graceful little occupants never failed to greet Helena and her guide with a pleasant smile and a word of kindly welcome. After passing most of the islands, the wondering maiden beheld, in the near distance, one larger than any she had yet seen; on it stood a great and glorious temple of white marble, its pinnacles shining with silver and gold; its front and its roof, its domes, and its slender and graceful pillars, gleamed with lapis lazuli and precious stones, and up its white steps and through its pearly gates were hastening thousands and thousands of fairies. Arrived at this sacred isle, Helena's companion requested her to alight, and follow him. He led the way into the temple. It was more beautiful inside than out; the floor was a splendid mosaic of the richest gems; magnificent paintings adorned the walls, and covered the lofty ceiling; exquisitely lovely plants and flowers were everywhere, and splendid, richly-hued butterflies streamed in and out of the open doors and windows. At the upper end of the temple, on a silver globe, that gave out colours like a rainbow, stood the priestess—a fairy of god-like and ravishing beauty :

stars shone in her radiant hair; her robe seemed to be made of sunlight, and in her hand she held a cross composed of a single diamond. She raised her cross high above her head—the elfin throng fell on their knees—and there arose a strain of celestial music, so overpowering in its sweetness that Helena fell prostrate on the floor, and bowed her head to the ground in awe and wonder. It was the fairies' song of praise. When it was over the priestess advanced to Helena, held out to her her hand, and addressed her. "Thanks, hearty thanks, for the favour done us. Thy presence has brought luck on our sabbath festival. Take this starry cross and wear it in remembrance of to-day."

So speaking, she hung round Helena's neck a minute cross, fashioned, as it appeared, of small stars.

"Whenever thou art troubled," added the priestess, "think of the 'good people,' and throw one of these stars in the air by moonlight. So will any lawful, not impious wish be granted. If you desire aught now, speak to our messenger!"

She kissed the girl on the forehead, then waved her hand to Dewdrop, who signing Helena to follow

him, led the way to the magic gondola. As they were sailing rapidly through the enchanted archipelago, her elfin companion and guide spoke of the promise of the priestess, and asked if there were anything the maiden especially desired. Said Helena, casting her eyes shyly downwards, a bright blush mantling her bright face, "Otto would be very happy if he had twenty gold ducats, and—and—so should I."

"Nothing easier," answered Lord Dewdrop, briskly; "what you wish shall be done. Anything else? don't be afraid to speak!"

"Yes, there is one other thing I should be glad if you could do. That tiresome Klaus Schwartz is always coming to our house. And, would you believe it?" and the girl laughed merrily, "he pretends to be courting me! He sits in the corner hour after hour glowering at me with his great eyes, and never once speaking, until I feel quite uncomfortable. Now, if you could just play him a little trick or two—folks say the good people are mischievous sometimes—that would frighten him away, and keep him from coming any more, I should be so glad. I don't want him to be really

hurt, you know, for though he is full of stupidity and conceit, and very ugly into the bargain, I don't think he means me ill. Can you do it, or am I asking too much? It would be such fun!" and Helena laughed in the anticipation.

"Certainly, it shall be done. You will find Klaus at your father's house when you get home, but I pledge the word of a true cavalier that he will visit you no more; and as you are so kindly disposed towards the oaf, we will be careful not to break any of his bones."

They were by this time ascending the river; the light became more obscure, the moon seemed to wax less and less; they were sailing rapidly into darkness. "Here," said the sprite, throwing something round her neck, "is my wedding present for Otto and thee; above all, be discreet and gossip not, and remember that the 'good people' are the sworn friends of thee and thine, as I am a true cavalier."

The upward and onward motion of the gondola now became so rapid that consciousness again left the maiden; she had a confused sense of going higher, higher, higher; of Lord Dewdrop waving

his tiny hat, and kissing his tiny hand, and floating away with his tiny skiff, in a sea of bluest ether. And then she found herself lying amongst the purple heather and the waving grass on the summit of the Sonnenberg, the yellow moonbeams lighting up all around her.

As she rose Otto ran to her.

"Where hast thou been?" he asked; "I caught a glimpse of thee standing hereabout, as I came up the hill, but though I have searched high and low, and have been running in all directions, I could not find thee."

"And how long have I been away?"

"It is quite half an hour since I last saw thee."

"That is very strange," answered Helena, "only half an hour?"

"But I suppose the 'good people' knew I had to be home soon? Come, let us go down."

As they descended the hill, Helena, with many injunctions as to secrecy, told her lover of her adventures in fairyland. He listened wonder-struck, and more than half incredulous; he feared it was all too good to be true, and thought that perhaps

his sweetheart had been the victim of witchcraft and illusion.

"I don't care what thou sayest, Otto," said Helena positively, "we shall be married in a month. Take my word for it!" She had almost said "the word of a true cavalier."

"But where are the twenty ducats to come from?" asked Otto. "Thy father is a man of his word, and even if he were not, we are too poor to marry. And how wilt thou get rid of Klaus?"

"Never mind, thou wilt see!—the 'good people' have promised us good luck, and they are true. Adieu, Otto! I must run home."

"But, bless me, Helena! thou wilt never go home with that string of dried mushrooms round thy neck!"

"Dried mushrooms? I have no dried mushrooms!"

"What are these, then?" and Otto took from her neck a complete necklace of them.

"It must be Lord Dewdrop's wedding present, and a queer one it is. Here, Otto! put them into thy pocket, they will do for thy breakfast in the morning. I dare not take them into the house,

mother would want to know where I have got them, and dried mushrooms don't grow in the fields."

Otto, thinking Lord Dewdrop must be a very funny gentleman to make such a strange wedding present, especially when no wedding was in prospect, or even possible, put the mushrooms in his pocket, and, after a loving embrace, bade Helena good night.

Dewdrop was right. Helena found Klaus Schwartz sitting in his accustomed corner of the cottage; as she entered, he stood up and greeted her with his invariable "Good evening, my Fräulein, I hope I see you well!" Scarcely had he sat down, however, when, uttering a howl of anguish, he sprung from his chair as if propelled by a catapult.

"Whatever is the matter?" exclaimed the quarryman, agape with astonishment.

"Something pricked!" said Klaus ruefully, at the same time rubbing himself energetically. Andrew carefully examined the chair. "You must be mistaken," he said, "there is nothing here that can prick."

"Mistaken? No! ach Gott, no! I am not mistaken, Herr Andrew, I wish I was—lord! how it

pricked!" and the little man, after a very minute inspection of the chair, slowly and with much care, gradually feeling his way, as it were, again resumed his seat.

"Take a pipe?" asked Andrew, handing Klaus his tobacco pouch, and himself lighting up. Klaus accepted the pipe and began to puff fiercely, his painful sensations seemed gradually to subside as the smoke went upwards, he was just beginning to feel easy and comfortable, when—with a howl louder than before, he shot a second time from his chair. As ill-luck would have it, Andrew's pipe had that instant gone out, and as he stooped to pick up from the hearth a chip with which to relight it, his head came in violent contact with the nose of the flying Klaus, knocking the latter forcibly back into the seat he had just vacated. Klaus rose again immediately, groaning with anguish, and while with one hand he caressed his damaged organ he rubbed himself vigorously with the other. "Oh, my nose! oh, my nose! Mein Gott, how it smarts! It swells —swells, it will be bigger than ever. What a sight I shall be!"

There was reason in this fear. The ordinary size

of his nose was considerably above the average, a fact of which he was fully aware, and one which gave him no small annoyance. As the protuberance enlarged from the effects of the blow, its dimensions became quite portentous, and when the swelling extended to his eyes, half shutting them up, the little man's appearance was ludicrous in the extreme.

"What possessed you to jump up in that extraordinary way, Herr Klaus?" asked the quarryman, rubbing his head, which however, had sustained only very slight damage.

"Something pricked—tausend teufels!—something pricked again. You would have jumped too, Herr Andrew. Oh! Gott im Himmel! my poor nose!"

"The man has surely gone mad, or he's bewitched!" muttered Andrew to himself. "Here, take my chair, it won't prick you, I'm sure. And see! the hausfrau is bringing a bit of supper; draw up to the table, mein Herr!"

The quarryman's evening meal was generally limited to black rye bread and strong cheese, but on this occasion, in honour of the visit of Klaus, the

frau had cooked some soup, and sent out for a pot of beer. The soup was not over strong, its chief ingredient being onions, and the careful cook had endeavoured to disguise the weakness of the fluid by a liberal use of coarse black pepper.

"Will you have a basin of *fleischbrühe,* Herr Klaus? it seems hot and strong. Do your nose good, and make you feel more comfortable."

"Thank you, Herr Andrew, I will take a basin!"

Everybody at the table set to with appetite, and the broth was consumed as fast as its hotness would permit it to be swallowed. Now it happened, unfortunately for Klaus, that in his basin, concealed in a shred of onion, was a big lump of undissolved pepper. This he unwittingly put in his mouth and attempted to swallow; it stuck in his throat, and was about to produce a violent fit of coughing, to prevent which, he seized his glass and gulped down a drink of beer. The attempt resulted in disastrous failure. Soup, pepper, and beer met midway, and went wrong with him; a terrible explosion was imminent. Poor Klaus made heroic efforts to restrain it; he closed his mouth tightly, his face reddened, tears of agony coursed down his

cheeks, he grasped the edge of the table convulsively with both hands.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the frau, "what is the matter with Herr Schwartz! He's in a fit, hit him on the back Andrew, hit him on the back!"

The quarryman, who had by no means a light hand, did hit him on the back, gave the small man such a whack, that he exploded like a bottle of champagne in warm weather. At the same moment "something pricked again," and Klaus, burning with shame and rage, and thinking himself the victim of some vile conspiracy rushed headlong from the house.

A splash, a plunge, a loud gabbling of geese, a quacking of ducks, an exclamation of dismay, a cry for help.

"Heaven save us!" cried Andrew, "if he has not gone and tumbled into the Schweingrube! We must help him out, or he'll be smothered."

The Schweingrube was a pit or pond on the opposite side of the road to the quarryman's house; the water was shallow, but the mud deep, and it was the favourite resort of pigs, geese, and ducks, which latter often roosted near it. People drowned dogs and cats in the Schweingrube, and it was a general

receptacle for all the filth of the village. The wretched Klaus, running impetuously from the cottage, taking no heed whither he went, had fallen head-foremost into this dreadful hole.

Andrew, taking a long pole and lantern, for the moon had become overcast, and followed by his wife, by Helena, and the other children, hastened to the rescue. They found the miserable man up to his neck in the pond, so firmly stuck in the mud that he could not raise a foot. Andrew reached him the pole, but it required the united efforts of Helena and her father to extricate him. At last they landed him; he stood once more on firm earth—and nice he looked. He had lost his hat, and he had lost his boots, a piece of stiff mud covered one of his eyes, there was mud in his hair, mud in his beard, his clothes were plastered with mud; the night was chilly, and his teeth chattered with cold, and altogether he was the most wretched and woe-begone object Helena had ever seen. She felt even sorry for her admirer, and almost thought that the fairies—for she had no doubt it was their doing—had been rather too hard on him.

"Lend him a coat and a pair of shoes, father,"

she exclaimed, "and your big overcoat, it will keep him warm until he gets home."

But Klaus had been wounded in his tenderest feelings, he had been made ridiculous before the girl he affected to love; he would not wait, shoeless and hatless as he was, he darted across the fields towards his own house, and was never from that night known to enter the quarryman's cottage again.

* * * * * *

As Otto next morning was putting on his jacket, he heard to his surprise somethiug jingle in his pocket, and when he looked, found to his utter astonishment that the dried mushrooms had disappeared, and twenty golden ducats had come in their place. He ran to Helena; she stood at the cottage door.

"See, see, what the dried mushrooms have turned into! Where is thy father? Now he will let us be betrothed!"

"Thou wilt believe now," said Helena, smiling. "Was I dreaming last night?"

At that moment Andrew came up and regarded, in speechless astonishment, the handful of gold pieces that Otto held before him.

"Will you give your consent now, Herr Andrew?" he asked triumphantly.

"But it is impossible," said the quarryman, "I can scarcely believe my own eyes, where have you got all this gold, has it been honestly come by?"

"Ask Helena! She knows better than I do."

"It has been quite honestly come by, father, but I cannot tell thee exactly how."

"But thou must tell me, child! I want to know," said the quarryman.

"Let the girl alone, and don't ask her foolish questions, Andrew. Yesterday was Whit Sunday, and thy daughter, as I know, is a favourite of the 'good people.' She is lucky herself, and will bring you all luck if you will let her."

The speaker was Pattie Lene, who had joined the group unobserved. Andrew looked puzzled and foolish, but asked no questions.

"Yes, I will keep my word, children," he said, "you may be betrothed, and married too, whenever you like. I need not say anything to old Peter Schwartz," he added. "I don't suppose Klaus will come after Helena any more, he does not seem to be a favourite of the 'good people' at any rate."

A month afterwards the lovers were married. The fairy-sent gold enabled Otto to start a carpenter's shop of his own, in which he throve so well that after a few years he was able to buy a piece of land and build a house. He provided well for his parents and sister, who, however, did not live long, and he made the old age of the quarryman and his wife easy and comfortable.

Many years lived Helena and Otto, they saw sons and daughters grow up around them, and though they spoke little of the cause of their prosperity, they carefully preserved the gift of the fairy priestess, and often adjured their children to think gratefully and speak kindly of the good people.

# MURDER GLEN.

THERE is no pleasanter road in the neighbourhood of Dresden than that leading to Bautzen and Pillnitz. Winding now through a picturesque forest, now by the side of a deep ravine crowded with tall fir trees and the graceful birch, it ascends higher and higher — affording, here and there, charming glimpses of the valley of the Elbe and the Saxon capital—until Weisser Hirsch, the point of its greatest elevation, is attained, whence the view, reaching over Saxon Switzerland and towards the Bohemian frontier, is for extent and variety amongst the finest in Germany.

The road thus favoured by nature is also rich in historical associations. Over it have passed some of the greatest monarchs and warriors, some of the

most famous armies, of whom history makes mention.

During the bombardment of Dresden by the Prussians, under Frederick the Great in 1760, Weisser Hirsch was the headquarters of the Prince of Holstein, and at that part of the road where the highway branches off to Pillnitz, a wretched and terrified horde of citizens—men, women, and children—fleeing from the burning and death-stricken city, turned to cast a last look on their ruined and flame-enveloped homes.

It was by the Bautzen road that Napoleon, then at the very height of his power, and at the head of half a million of men, advanced to the invasion of Russia. Seven months later, at dead of night, in a sledge with three companions, ruined and a fugitive, he again traversed the same road on his way to France.

Alexander, the first, of Russia, following on the traces of the flying French, slept at Weisser Hirsch, before entering Dresden; and joining Frederick William of Prussia next morning near the Radeberg highway, was joyfully received by the inhabitants; the bells rang out a glad peal, cannons fired, and hundreds of young girls strewed with flowers the

road by which the two monarchs were to enter the city.

On the 28th August, 1813, Napoleon, descending from Stolpen to the rescue of Dresden, and his last great victory, paused with his guard, where the highways of Pillnitz and Buntzen meet near the Mordgrundbrücke, to survey the other side of the Elbe, and beheld, in the plain to the south of the city, extending in one unbroken line from Blasewitz to Schuster Haus, the bivouac fires of his enemies.

Near the spot thus made memorable by the halt of the Emperor and the old guard, there occurred, says the saga, many centuries since, an event that has given to the glen by the wayside, and to the bridge by which it is crossed, the names they now bear, and has been woven into the following legend.

* * * * * *

Six hundred years ago, all the land between Dresden and Loschwitz, from the heights of Weisser Hirsch to the banks of the Elbe, belonged to the noble families of Von Elohmen and Von Birken, a deep ravine only dividing their estates. Their lordly castles commanded river and road, and as they had extensive vineyards, pasture-grounds, and orchards,

besides numerous flocks and herds, as well as great houses in the city, the barons of the two houses were among the wealthiest and most powerful in the margraviate of Meissen.

Towards the close of the thirteenth century, the possessor of the title and estates of Von Birken was a young man of scarce twenty years of age—Baron Benno. His father had been killed in battle with the Thuringians, his mother had died of grief at the loss of her husband, and Benno, whilst still a babe, was left an orphan. He had been tenderly nurtured during his infancy by his aunt, Mechtild von Frankenberg, and his uncle, a cultivated, and, for that age, a liberal churchman, had superintended his education. Besides possessing a greater share of book-learning than most young men of his time, Benno was well skilled in horsemanship and all martial exercises, and enjoyed the advantages of being strong, active, and handsome. His reading had inspired him with a strong desire to see foreign countries; and he was especially anxious to visit those eastern lands which had such an irresistible attraction for all the ardent minds of the middle ages. As the best means of gratifying these aspirations,

he joined, almost before he was out of his teens, the sixth and last crusade under Edward of England. He journeyed through Hungary, Turkey, Asia Minor, and Syria; met with many adventures, and proved himself in Palestine so skilful, and withal so valiant, a warrior, that the name of Benno the Dauntless was by universal consent conferred upon him. At the end of eight years he returned to Meissenland, a bronzed and stalwart warrior.

Almost his first proceeding after his arrival was to call on his old friend and neighbour, Baron Hans von Elohmen. The baron was not at home, and great was Benno's surprise, when he was received and greeted by a tall and beautiful lady, who laughingly told him that she was the very same Elsbeth whom he had left, eight years before, a little girl of twelve. The two had a long talk over old times, and they had much to tell each other; Benno related many of his adventures in the Holy Land, and the countries through which he had wandered, and Elsbeth had all to recount that she could remember of the occurrences in Saxony and Bohemia during the time of the young noble's absence.

The intimacy thus commenced, or rather renewed,

ripened rapidly into love, and Benno had not been many months settled in his old home ere he made a formal offer of his hand to Elsbeth, and asked her father's consent to their union. Fortune smiled on his suit, the only condition imposed by the Baron von Elohmen being, that inasmuch as his daughter had been for many years motherless, and had led a solitary life in his castle, she should, in view of the high position she was destined to occupy, finish her education by spending a year in the Court of the Margrave. With some little demur on the part of Benno, who considered Elsbeth to be already perfection, and in no need of further education or refinement, this condition was accepted, and, as was quite natural under the circumstances, Benno, in order to be near his betrothed, became a courtier, and passed much of his time at Meissen, and in the new castle of Dresden.

At this period Meissenland was under the rule of Margrave Frederick the Little, a prince who, like many other Saxon princes both before and since, cared less for the well-being of his country than for the gratification of his avarice and ambition. He dealt with the land as if it were his own private pos-

session, and regarded the people who lived on it no more than if they had been horses and cattle.

In 1289 Frederick sold to Wenzel, the King of Bohemia, Dresden and the country round Dresden as far as Tharant, Radeberg, and Liebenthal. It was exceedingly disagreeable to Benno to be thus forcibly and suddenly converted into a Bohemian; he loved the country of his birth, and was a true German; moreover, foreign travel and contact with other minds, had given him ideas that were as yet utterly strange to the rude nobles of Saxony. He saw how incompatible were frequent changes of allegiance, and the division of the country into petty principalities, with peace and progress, and even royalty itself. And the alienation of Dresden was so repugnant to him, that, notwithstanding his love for Elsbeth, he withdrew from the Court and retired to his castle. To the lord of Elohmen, however, the substitution of King Wenzel for Margrave Frederick was highly gratifying: with the latter he had never been on good terms; but on the occasion of several visits he had made to Prague, the politic ruler of Bohemia, who had long been ambitious to extend his sway over the valley of

the Lower Elbe, had treated the powerful Saxon noble with marked consideration, and when the transfer took place sent to him many flattering messages and offered the baron a high command in his army. Thus the two nobles espoused different sides, and though, as yet, they were outwardly on friendly terms, a rupture, sooner or later, was inevitable, and Von Elohmen only refrained from peremptorily forbidding all intercourse between Von Birken and his daughter, in the hope that the former might be won over to the support of the Bohemian dynasty. At the same time, to mark his displeasure at what he termed his friend's obstinacy, he gave as few opportunities as possible for the lovers to meet.

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It was a beautiful night in September; the harvest moon shone through the purple sky, steeping the flowing river in a golden glow, and illuming the forest glades with its dim and mystic light. On the slope of a hill overhanging the Elbe, whose summit was crowned with the turrets of a lordly castle, and under the shadow of tall trees, paced slowly to and fro a cavalier and a lady. The cavalier was Benno von Birken, the lady Elsbeth von Elohmen.

"Knowest thou why I asked thee to meet me here, Elsbeth?" asked Benno.

"Nay, I cannot say; but I fear me it concerns this unhappy difference between my father and thee."

"I will tell thee! My trusty servitor, Walter, remains now in the city; he is charged to inform himself, and give me timely information of the movements of the Court, and particularly as to anything relating to Baron Hans and the Lady Elsbeth. Last night he brought me the news that you had returned to the castle. This morning I hastened down the hill to greet you both. To my surprise I was denied admittance; the seneschal informed me that the baron was undoubtedly at home, but that both he and his lady were too much occupied to see me. Full of alarm and misgiving I turned away, and by the sure hand of Walter sent the missive which thou hast assuredly received, else hadst thou not been here."

"True, dear Benno. I had it from my faithful Gretchen, to whom Walter had contrived to convey it unobserved. I know not why thou wert sent so rudely away. I am not aware that my father was so much occupied, and as for me, thou knowest as

well as my own heart that I am never otherwise than glad and happy to see thee."

"What then means this treatment? Our betrothal has the baron's sanction; his consent he cannot, without breaking his word, without dishonour, withdraw."

"I am unable to conjecture," replied Elsbeth; "unless it be thy continued refusal to accept the rule of the King of Bohemia."

"What thinkest thou, dear Elsbeth, of my conduct? Am I wrong?"

"Ah, no! My heart in this, as in everything, is with thee, dear Benno. A true and loyal Saxon cannot throw off his allegiance as a worn-out garment, or, like a vagabond zigeuner, be ever changing his country. But I can only remain with thee a few minutes longer; my father is expecting to-night guests from Prague; should they arrive during my absence I may be missed and sought after, and were I discovered here, our future meetings would doubtless, in my father's present mood, be prevented."

"Guests from Prague! knowest thou who they are?"

"One name alone have I heard," answered the

lady. "That of the special emissary of King Wenzel, a certain Count Lodomar von Tannenberg."

"He! Lodomar von Tannenberg!"

"What knowest thou of this count, Benno?"

"I do know him; and not a subtler, more unscrupulous, more dangerous man lives, and he is my sworn foe."

"Why is he thy foe, Benno? I knew not you had ever met."

"I met him first in Hungary, and we journeyed thence in company to Palestine. Like myself, he served under the banner of Edward of England, who is not only a great captain, but a strict disciplinarian. The prince, anxious to gain the good will of the peasantry and country people, issued stringent orders against plundering and extortion; and every knight in the army was required not only to observe this rule, but to report every instance of its infringement. It happened that I was out one day patrolling with my company in the neighbourhood of Acre. As we passed a small village, a few miles from the city, I noticed amongst the inhabitants great excitement, and an old man of venerable aspect was wringing his hands and uttering loud

lamentations. On inquiring the cause of his grief I was informed that a number of Christian soldiers, led by a knight, had just carried off the old man's daughter, a beautiful girl of sixteen. I asked the peasant if he could identify the leader of the band, should he see him again. Receiving an answer in the affirmative, I rode immediately back to the camp, taking with me the bereaved father. I led him to the prince, before whom he laid his complaint. During the interview Count Lodomar, by the merest chance, entered the royal tent. The old peasant at once pointed him out as the despoiler of his home. The Bohemian knight, ignorant as to the amount and nature of the proof that could be brought against him, thought it best to admit the truth of the accusation. Edward thereon compelled him to restore the girl to her father, and Count Lodomar was deprived of his command and expelled from the army. I was present when the sentence was pronounced, and as the disgraced knight turned to leave the presence he hissed in my ear—'I owe this disgrace to your meddling, Benno von Birken; it shall be washed out in your heart's blood.' I challenged and would have fought

him, but the prince refused his permission. When passing through Constantinople, on my way home, I found the count in high office there, and in enjoyment of the emperor's favour. He had not forgotten his threat of vengeance, and sought to take my life; had I not received a friendly warning, and escaped from the city in disguise, he would, I have no doubt, have accomplished his object. Why he has left the East I know not; probably his ambition has overleaped itself, and he has been compelled to seek another sphere of action in the Court of Bohemia. I fear his presence in Dresden is of evil augury for thee and me, my Elsbeth."

"I hope not, dear Benno. I cannot believe that my father, after having once approved our betrothal, will forbid our marriage; the time fixed for it is now near at hand. But of one thing, be assured, Benno; I will, whatever comes, be true to our plighted troth; in life and death I am thine."

"And I, Elsbeth, I swear that in life and death I am thine."

And with a hurried embrace the lovers parted.

Slowly and thoughtfully Benno ascended the

mountain in the direction of his own house. He felt anxious and unhappy, and a sense of coming evil oppressed his soul. He knew well the weakness of the Baron von Elohmen's character, and feared the influence on him of the smooth tongue and evil mind of Lodomar von Tannenberg. Nothing, he felt sure, would be more gratifying to the count than to effect the rupture of his engagement with Elsbeth, and no effort to that end would be spared. Full of these thoughts he arrived at the upper extremity of the wood. Unwittingly he had wandered from the beaten track, and somewhat to his surprise found himself on a spot closely associated with the fortunes of his family—a grove of ancient oak and beech trees, planted in the form of a circle. In the centre of the circle stood a rude stone pillar covered with ivy and flanked on each side by two gigantic trees—an oak and a beech—whose size and age placed them foremost in the ranks of the veterans of the forest. In this place, said the saga, the founder of the house of Birken, Dietrich Redbeard, had planted his standard after a fierce battle with the Wends, and the grove was said to be haunted by the ghosts of the slain. Before the death of a lord of Birken

portentous sights and sounds were seen and heard, and such an event never failed to be heralded by some unusual occurrence. Just before the last baron, Benno's father, lost his life, the coping of the pillar had fallen down, and still lay, moss-covered, on the ground. As Benno approached the pillar and the two trees, he heard his name pronounced in a deep voice. The figure of a tall, bearded warrior, clad in ancient armour, and leaning upon a long two-handed sword, whose blade was stained with blood, stood before him in the moonlight.

"Benno von Birken, beware!" said the phantom; "seek not to ally thyself with the house of Elohmen. Danger and death lurk in the path thou treadest. Remember!"

> "When oaken branch shall break in twain,
> When blood the hoary beech shall rain,
> Will last of Birken's race be slain."

Before Benno had recovered from his astonishment the figure had melted into thin air, and disappeared from view. In the phantom, the young baron recognized, from the description handed down by tradition, and from one of the old portraits that hung in

his hall, Dietrich Redbeard, and the lines repeated by the ghost, had been familiar to him from his childhood. As to their origin, nothing certain was known. Some said they were first spoken by a Wendish magician to Dietrich himself; others, that they had been found by a priest in an old manuscript; but one thing at least was certain, the legend was an old one, and the oldest of the Birken servitors could not remember the time when it was not considered to be as ancient as the race itself.

The apparition of his ancestor made a deep impression on Benno, intensified his anxiety, and lent a still darker tinge to the gloom that already overshadowed him. But he never for an instant wavered in his resolution to be loyal to the land of his birth, and true to the lady of his love.

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Scarcely had Elsbeth arrived in the castle from her meeting with Benno, when the Bohemian guests were announced. Chief among them was Count Lodomar von Tannenberg, and Elsbeth could not but acknowledge to herself, that she had rarely, if ever, seen a handsomer or more courtly knight. Considerably above the average height of man, he was

strongly and symmetrically built; his face, though somewhat thin and worn, was intelligent and animated; his hair was brown and curling; his eyes black and piercing; and there were displayed in his manner, an air of self-possession and polished ease that bespoke as much the diplomatist as the soldier. It was indeed because of the charm of his manner, and his well-known diplomatic skill, that Count Lodomar had been selected by King Wenzel for his present mission. The Bohemians were on the eve of war with the Saxons, and Wenzel was extremely wishful to win over to his cause the principal nobles of his newly acquired territory. Foremost amongst them were the barons of Elohmen and Birken, and Von Tannenberg's instructions were to spare nothing in the way of persuasion, and such offers of rank and dignities, as might be likely to induce the two nobles to join the royal standard at Prague. Had King Wenzel been aware of the feud between Benno and Lodomar, he would probably have chosen some other emissary.

The Bohemian knight was greatly struck by the beauty of his host's daughter, a beauty of the old Teutonic type, and doubly attractive to a man who

had spent so many years of his life amongst the dusky beauties of the east; and he had not been many days in the castle before he conceived the idea of winning Elsbeth's love, and making her his wife, and thus at one stroke securing for himself a beautiful bride and a great heiress, and confirming the loyalty of the lord of Elohmen to his master. When he heard of the lady's betrothal to Benno von Birken, there was added to these promptings of self-interest and ambition the still more potent motive of revenge. To be the baron's successful rival in love, to wound him in his tenderest feelings, to tear from his arms, as it were, his betrothed bride, would be a very luxury of vengeance. Elohmen's irritation against his intended son-in-law, in that he had ventured to differ from him in his political opinions and action, greatly smoothed the way for the accomplishment of Count Lodomar's objects. The chief difficulty he soon discovered to be the reluctance of the baron to break his pledged word to his daughter and Benno, that at the end of the year he would consent to their marriage; and Tannenberg immediately took thought how to overcome this reluctance. His fertile mind was not long in finding a way.

Baron Hans had been much flattered, and highly gratified, by the marked manner in which he had already been noticed by King Wenzel, especially as the Margrave Frederick had invariably treated him with discourtesy, sometimes even with great rudeness. Lodomar took advantage of this feeling. He wrote to the king an account of his mission, dwelling with great minuteness on the disposition of the Dresden nobles towards the Bohemian dynasty; he mentioned the peculiar relations that subsisted between the families of Elohmen and Birken, and stated his opinion that Baron Benno was, and would remain, the king's implacable enemy; he pointed out the desirability of preventing the contemplated alliance of the two houses—an alliance that might have the effect of winning back the not very strong-minded Baron Hans to the Saxon cause; and suggested finally that it would be a brilliant stroke of policy to marry the Lady Elsbeth to a Bohemian noble. He spoke modestly of his own hopes, and insinuated, rather than advised, that the king should cause a letter to be written to the Baron von Elohmen, approving of his suit, and expressing the gratification with which the monarch would hear of its successful

issue. To this despatch an answer was speedily received, and Lodomar had the pleasure of handing to his host a most gracious letter, bearing the royal seal and sign-manual, setting forth the extreme satisfaction with which he had heard of the baron's continued loyalty; and mentioning pointedly the pleasure it would give him, were an alliance to be arranged between one of his most trusty councillors and nobles and the ancient and illustrious house of von Elohmen.

The baron's scruples were now scattered to the winds; he declared at once that he could not for a moment allow his promise to one, whom he styled a rebel, to stand against the gracious wish of his sovereign. He accepted the count's offer for his daughter's hand, told Elsbeth that she must consider her betrothal with Benno at an end, and ordered her, under pain of his displeasure, to give a favourable ear to the suit of Count Lodomar von Tannenberg. The poor girl wept and remonstrated, pleaded her love for Benno, and declared her determination to be the wife of none other. This opposition roused all the dogged obstinacy of the father's nature; he reproached her for her disobedience, commanded her

to accept the count, and swore a fierce oath that he would rather see her lying dead at his feet than allow her to become the bride of Benno von Birken. The behaviour of the count was in striking contrast with that of the baron; he used no roughness, no violence, he was all courtly grace, and lover-like gentleness; but none the less determined was he to make Elsbeth his. He suspected secret communications with her lover—her servants were changed, she was constantly watched by his creatures, she was never allowed to go out alone. She would have immured herself in her chamber; her father insisted that she should sit at table as usual, and that Lodomar should bear her company in her walks.

Benno heard of these proceedings, and lost no time in waiting upon the baron to inquire if it were true that he had betrothed Elsbeth to Count von Tannenberg.

"Quite true," answered the baron, "and I hope shortly to see my daughter the count's wife."

"But by your own free consent, my lord baron, Elsbeth is my betrothed wife. You surely cannot intend to break your plighted word!"

"I hold myself no longer bound by that consent, Baron Benno. I cannot balance a promise to a rebel against the expressed wish of my gracious sovereign. Had you taken my advice, and frankly accepted the Bohemian rule, this unhappiness had never arisen, we should have remained as firm friends as ever."

"I cannot consider, Herr von Elohmen, that my loyalty to the land of my birth, my unwillingness to accept a foreign despot for my sovereign, confers upon you the right to violate the most solemn engagement into which a man can enter; and had any other man than yourself, my lord baron, dared to stigmatize me as a rebel, he should have answered for his insolence with his life."

"I am not too old, Benno von Birken," answered the baron hotly, "to defend my honour with my own right hand; and if you consider yourself aggrieved, I am now, and always, ready to meet you, when and where you will."

"Cross swords with Elsbeth's father?—never! But bid Lodomar von Tannenberg beware!—tell him that Elsbeth is mine—do you hear? mine!—and that we have sworn to be true to each other in

life and in death; and say that none but I, Benno von Birken, shall marry her and live."

With these words the young baron strode from the room.

* * * * * *

For an entire month had Benno heard nothing of Elsbeth, nor had he during that time once seen her. His faithful Walter, though constantly on the watch, could gather no news for his master; the Elohmen servants, whom he often met and questioned, were either very ignorant of what was going on, or too much in awe of the baron or Count Lodomar to reveal it. This secrecy and the utter failure of all his attempts to communicate with Elsbeth, greatly disquieted Benno. He felt that some plot, hostile to his happiness, and the happiness of his beloved, and possibly to his own life, was being hatched, and the sense of his entire helplessness, of his utter inability either to detect or defeat it, drove him almost frantic. Various wild schemes had suggested themselves to his mind, only, on cool consideration to be despairingly abandoned—he had thought to obtain access to Elsbeth in disguise; but the Elohmen castle was too well guarded, and his person too

well known to give any hope for the success of such an attempt. It had occurred to him to call together his retainers, to summon to his aid some old companions in arms, and to carry off Elsbeth forcibly, in the light of the day, from her father and her would-be lover. But apart from the inherent difficulties and dangers of an enterprise so desperate, the vengeance of the King of Bohemia, the possible confiscation of his estates, were risks not lightly to be incurred, and on the mere chance of success; for it was by no means certain that Elsbeth was in her father's castle, indeed Benno strongly suspected that she had been taken away to some distant place.

One autumn evening Benno was pacing moodily to and fro in his chamber, now he would walk rapidly, showing in his manner every sign of agitation and unrest, then he would suddenly stop, and remain for many minutes at a time in the middle of the room buried in thought, motionless and silent. The storm howled without, the wild wind shrieked overhead, and heavy rain plashed against the windows, but he heeded them not.

Hasty footsteps are heard in the corridor — a man, pale, excited, with dishevelled hair, his

clothes streaming with wet, rushes into the chamber.

"Walter, Walter! What is it? Thou hast heard something of her, quick, quick, tell me quickly!"

"Yes, my lord! I have heard something. Oh! prepare yourself for evil tidings, Herr Baron. An hour since, in the hostel at Loschwitz, I met one of Count Lodomar's servants; he had, fortunately, only lately arrived from Bohemia, and consequently knew me not, was moreover in his cups, and spoke freely of the doings at Elohmen Castle. He told me, Herr Baron," continued Walter in an agitated voice, looking apprehensively at his master, upon whom he feared the effect of the revelation he was about to make, "he told me that this day have the Lady Elsbeth and Count Lodomar von Tannenberg been wedded in the castle chapel."

"Thou liest, Walter, thou liest, false knave!" exclaimed the baron, with a cry of rage and pain.

"Herr Baron!" said Walter, deeply offended. "Have I served you so long and so faithfully, have I fought by your side, have I tended you in health and in sickness to be told that I lie? to be called false knave?"

"Forgive me, good Walter, forgive me. I knew not what I said. But this man, this servitor of the Bohemian count, surely he lied! Elsbeth cannot be false. I will believe anything rather than that—did we not swear to be true to each other in life and in death? is she not my betrothed?"

"I know not, my lord. But the man seemed to speak the truth, and he said that some of the people in the castle had been telling that the lady Elsbeth had for many days looked like a ghost, that only the Count, Baron Hans, the chaplain, and two of the count's creatures from Bohemia, were present at the wedding, and that Lady Elsbeth was carried insensible from the chapel to her chamber."

"Ah! what villainy is here!" exclaimed Benno; "my poor Elsbeth has been tortured; forced to go through a ceremony she abhorred, and I here, ignorant and helpless. I will rescue her or perish. Here Walter, my sword and my mantle!"

"Surely, my lord, you will not go alone. You will not attempt anything rash. You will at least let me accompany you," implored Walter.

"I shall go quite alone. At such a juncture as this there is no safety in numbers. I am cool and

collected, Walter, and shall use stratagem, not force."

And Benno stepped forth into the night. The rain had ceased, but the wind was high. Turning his face to the storm, he bent his head, drew his mantle tightly around him, and hurried with rapid footsteps in the direction of Elohmen Castle. At such a moment there was no room in his mind for Dietrich Redbeard, and he took the nearest path, a path that led him right through the haunted grove. As he neared the ivy-clad pillar, the eddying wind suddenly raised the cloud-veil from the bright face of the crescent moon, her light shone full on the glade, and as Benno passed within the shadow of the old beech, he heard again the deep solemn voice of his ancestor: "Benno von Birken, beware! Seek not to ally thyself with the house of Elohmen. Danger and death are in the path thou treadest! Remember!"

> "When oaken branch shall break in twain,
> When blood the hoary beech shall rain,
> Will last of Birken's race be slain."

There stood the phantom, leaning as before, on his ensanguined sword; in uttering the last words

of his ominous warning, he slowly faded from sight. In the same moment Benno felt something warm drop on his hand, he held it up in the moonlight and saw—a great gout of blood! And the very same moment there came a fierce blast of wind, a blast so violent, and so long sustained, that all the trees of the grove were bent nearly level with the ground. A tempestuous swaying to and fro, a snapping of branches, a sound of tearing and rending, and with a report like distant thunder, the great oak was rent in twain.

For a few minutes Benno stood like one paralyzed, then muttering, "Come weal, come woe! I will be true to my oath, and to love. In life and in death, Elsbeth, I have sworn to be thine!" rushed impetuously down the mountain.

Once within the precincts of the castle of Elohmen, the baron advanced silently and cautiously beneath the walls; several times he attempted, but in vain, to scale them; he crept round to the postern, through which his mistress was wont to come to their trysting-place. There, sustained by a wish, rather than a hope, that he might hear her voice or her footstep in the garden, he waited long and patiently.

At last, just as he was turning away, the sound of rushing footsteps fell on his ear; some one was at the postern—Benno sprang hastily into the shade—the postern opened—a white figure emerged from it. With an exclamation of joy the baron darted forward, and Elsbeth was in his arms. She was clad in wedding costume, her beautiful hair streamed in wild disorder over her shoulders, and in her right hand she held a gleaming dagger.

"Thou here, Benno!" she cried. "Oh heaven, be thanked. I thought I was abandoned of God and of thee. Save me, Benno, save me! Knowest thou, my betrothed, my true love, that I have been dragged to the altar, and held before it whilst a false priest pretended to wed me to a man I hate. I hate Lodomar von Tannenberg! In vain I protested, in vain I refused my consent, the ceremony was completed, and the lying priest declared us man and wife. I resolved not to spend another night in my father's castle. I have found the means of escaping, and rather than be taken back alive, I will stab myself to the heart with this dagger thou seest in my hand."

"Fly with me, my beloved! I will find thee a

secure refuge, and defend thee with my life. Come ere it is too late."

She gave him her hand, and they ran towards the forest; looking back they saw lights moving rapidly to and fro in the castle, they heard excited voices uttering loud exclamations. Elsbeth's flight had been discovered.

"We must halt for a while in the glen until the heat of the pursuit is over," said Benno. "Then we can gain my castle by a little-known track with which I am acquainted."

But they were too late. As Lodomar, who had found out the former trysting-place of the lovers, emerged from the postern, he caught a glimpse of Elsbeth's white robe in the distance, and, hurrying forward, was just in time to see her and Benno descend into the glen.

"Here, for some hours at least, we are safe," said Benno cheerily, as they reached the bottom of the ravine.

Scarcely were the words spoken when the lovers saw the form of a man advancing towards them, and heard the fierce voice of Lodomar exclaiming, "By what right, Benno von Birken, dost thou carry away

my wedded wife? Yield her up to me, or by heaven thou diest!"

"She is no wife of thine, false knight; Elsbeth is my betrothed, my wife before God! My life and this good sword are between her and thee."

"Have at thee then, Baron Benno! This night shall one of us die."

And the two men engaged in deadly combat. As swordsmen they were not unevenly matched, each knew how much depended on the strength of his arm and his skill in fence, and both fought with the fierce determination of tigers and the coolness of gladiators. Elsbeth stood silently by, her hands raised imploringly to heaven; she knew too well the danger of disturbing her lover's attention even by a single word. Only once she interfered. Lodomar being hardly pressed by his adversary, began to call aloud, "Help here, help!" in the hope that some of the Elohmen, or his own retainers, might hear his voice, when Elsbeth stepped forward, holding her weapon aloft.

"Silence, coward!" she cried, "speak another word, and I will stab thee with my dagger."

Round and round, backward and forward went

the foemen, sometimes they paused from mutual exhaustion, and it was long ere either of them appeared to gain the least advantage, but at length, Benno's foot slipped on the wet leaves that lay upon the ground, and before he could recover himself he received, what he thought at the moment, a slight wound. Count Lodomar, encouraged by this turn in his favour, lost some of his previous caution, gave his opponent a chance for which he had long been watching—the next moment Benno made a tremendous lunge forward, and thrust his sword up to the hilt through the body of the count, who fell backward on the turf and never spoke more.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Elsbeth fervently, "thou hast done no murder, my Benno, Lodomar was not only thy own enemy, but the sworn foe of thy country. But what ails thee? thou staggerest—thou pressest thy hand on thy heart. Holy Virgin, he is wounded! He falls!" Benno sunk on the leaves. Elsbeth knelt beside him—she put her arms around him—she pillowed his head on her bosom—she wiped the heavy drops of perspiration from his brow. The crimson stream of his life was ebbing fast away.

"Elsbeth, dear Elsbeth!" he whispered, as she bent her ear to her lover's dying lips, "I have been true, I swore that in life and in death I would be thine, I have kept my oath."

"And I too, Benno, will keep my oath. In death, dearest, will I be thine—yet a few moments, and we shall be together in a land where all is peace and love." And she pressed her burning mouth upon that of her dead lover, upon his cheeks, upon his brow; she closed his eyes, and then placing the sharp point of the dagger against her tender bosom, she thrust it unshrinkingly into her heart, and throwing her arms round Benno's body, and laying her cheek on his, Elsbeth yielded up her pure and loving spirit to heaven.

* * * * * *

The next day, the three bodies were discovered in the glen. The Baron von Elohmen was terror-stricken and heart-broken, for he loved his daughter dearly. He caused the unhappy lovers to be buried in one grave, and then, assuming the cowl of a monk, spent the short remainder of his days in a convent. With the two barons perished the races of Elohmen and Birken: their lands have passed to

strangers, their castles have long since been swept away, but in the name of the glen by the Bautzener road the memory of the tragedy is still preserved; and no traveller can journey by the highway from Dresden to Weisser Hirsch, or from Dresden to Loschwitz, without passing Murder Glen, and traversing Murder Glen Bridge.

# THE KATESTONE OF ANNABERG.

IT was towards the close of a short day in winter, that the miner Günzer—a decent and pious man—left his work in the mine, and started on his way to his cottage, in the village of Frohnau, near Annaberg.

The snow was falling fast, the shades of evening were rapidly darkening around him, the forest path was already invisible, the rising wind moaned dismally amongst the tall pines; and Günzer, with bent head, battling against the rising storm, hurried swiftly homeward. At a sharp turn in the road a stranger suddenly emerging from a thicket joined and accosted him.

"The snow falls fast," said the new comer, "night is upon us, the way through these woods hard to find.

Will you kindly, Herr Miner, take pity on a belated wayfarer and give him quarters until sunrise in your cottage?" Neither the man's appearance nor manner greatly pleased Günzer, but he was always apt to err on the side of good-nature and kindness, so listening favourably to the appeal, he granted the stranger's request, and as the latter seemed to be of taciturn disposition, the two trudged on silently side by side until the cottage of the miner was reached. The door was opened to them by his daughter Katherine, who held in her hand a lamp. No sooner did she set eyes on her father's companion than she uttered a loud scream, and fell unconscious on the floor. The astounded Günzer hastened forward, relit the lamp, and raised the fainting girl in his arms.

The stranger had disappeared.

So soon as Katherine could speak, her father asked her the meaning of this strange scene.

"Last night," she answered, "I had a terrible dream. I thought I was lying under a tree in the forest, when a man came to me, kissed me, and claimed me for his bride; as he turned to go away, I saw by his horns and his cloven foot, that it was

the evil one. The stranger who just now came to the door with you is the same."

The miner was trying to console the girl, and to persuade her it was all an illusion, when his eye was attracted to a piece of paper lying on the table; on this paper was written, "Nine weeks hence, at midnight, will I return to fetch home my bride." Now, there could be no doubt that all was too true, and the dream was plainly in course of fulfilment.

Father and daughter spent the nine weeks in bitter sorrow and anguish, and though they prayed without ceasing and went daily to mass, an inward voice told them that their trial was not so lightly to be evaded. And so indeed it proved; for when, at the appointed time, the hour of midnight struck, a knock was heard at the window of the cottage, and a terrible voice cried,—

"Bring forth the bride, bring forth the bride!"

But the miner called aloud for heaven's help, and amidst a frightful thunderstorm the fiend vanished, exclaiming in terrific accents,—

"If in nine days thou be not my bride, thy house shall be utterly destroyed by fire."

In sorrow and fear the nine days were passed, and

when the last stroke of twelve, on the night of the ninth day had sounded, the demon's knock was again heard at the window; again in brazen tones he shouted,—

"Bring out the bride, bring out the bride! Or burns the house!"

Then Grimer clasped his innocent daughter in his arms, exclaiming, "By Christ's wounds get thee away, Satan!"

"Bride, the house burns," replied the evil one; "yet another nine weeks' respite, and becomest thou then not my bride, thy father shall perish miserably!" With these words he disappeared, but the cottage was in flames, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that father and daughter were able to save their lives.

They sought shelter with relations, and their good neighbours built them a new cottage at the edge of the forest; for the place of the old one was now a stinking pool of brimstone. But the weeks and days flew rapidly by; the hour fixed for the third and last visit of Katherine's infernal lover almost arrived, when she fell into a deep sleep, and dreamt. Dreamt that she was once more out in the forest,

walking by the side of a satanic husband, who had triumphantly claimed her as his own, and followed by an awesome bridal procession of grinning skeletons and gibbering fiends.

As, with a terrified cry, she awoke from her sleep, a beautiful angel, clad in bright rose-coloured raiment, carrying a crucifix in his right hand, entered the cottage, and beckoned Katherine to follow him, saying, "I bring thee peace."

He led her, by a way quite unknown to her, through the middle of the forest, until they arrived at a high rock, which opening of itself, as the angel touched it with his crucifix, revealed a wide gate of silver studded with precious stones. Before the gate sat seven old men, with spiked helmets and long beards, who, when they saw the shining crucifix, prostrated themselves reverently on the ground, and suffered Katherine and her heavenly companion to pass on. They entered a wide and lofty hall, lighted solely by the sheen of priceless gems. In the centre of this hall, reclining under a canopy of more than earthly magnificence, they perceived a maiden of more than mortal beauty; her coronet and her girdle were composed of blazing stars; and seven swart

and turbaned dwarfs served her on bended knees. She inquired of the angel, what brought him there and who was his companion; whereon the former related what had happened to Katherine, the fearful danger she was in, and prayed the lady's help. Then the goddess of the mountain, for she it was, ordered one of the attendant dwarfs to bring from her crystal cupboard a casket of sardonyx. Taking out of it a crucifix of lustrous diamonds, she handed it to Katherine with the words,—

"Wear this ever on thy bosom, maiden, and evil can never harm thee!"

At these words, the dwarf drew from the casket a string of pearls, and fastened to it the crucifix which he hung round her neck. Now the angel again led her by the hand, opened the rock by means of his holy talisman, and conducting her through the forest to within eyeshot of her home, took his leave, saying,—

"Fear not, thou art in God's keeping!"

As Katherine entered the house, she met her father, to whom she explained what had happened to her, and as proof of the truth of her story, showed him her diamond crucifix and necklace of

pearls. He told her that he too had received a proof that they were under God's care. As he was working in the mine he had found a golden crucifix; thinking to discover the name of the former owner, he examined it closely, when, to his great surprise, he perceived his own name, and under it the words, "Christ helps the faithful."

Thus were the two persecuted ones enabled to await, full of courage and hope, the last visit of the demon lover.

At length the moment came, and when the tolling of the midnight bell was borne on the breeze, the thrilling voice of the fiend was heard calling for Katherine,—

"Bride, come out; bride, come out!"

Katherine went to the window, opened it, and showed her crucifix. At this sight the evil one uttered a loud cry, and exclaimed,—

"Kate, Kate, I have no power over thee, thou art under the protection of heaven; but it is thy turn, Günzer, to go with me to hell. Come out, that I may carry thee away!"

Günzer held aloft his golden cross, which the demon no sooner saw than with a yell of rage he

disappeared; but not so quietly as before. A terrible storm arose; loud peals of thunder resounded through the forest; lightnings flashed across the sky, until the very heavens seemed to be on fire; the tallest trees came crashing down, and the brook rose to such a height as almost to wash away the cottage.

But when the clock struck one the hurricane was suddenly hushed, a calm, holy in its perfect stillness, pervaded all things, and a silvery moon penetrated with its translucent rays the erstwhile black and angry clouds.

Katherine, now freed for ever from her hellish suitor, gave her hand to a brave miner of Frohnau, who already had possession of her heart; and when, after some years, Günzer, upon whom time had begun to lay his heavy hand, retired from his post of overseer, his son-in-law took his place. Katherine never forgot the deadly perils she and her father had undergone together, and for the remainder of his life the old miner had a tranquil home in his daughter's house. When at last God called him away, she caused him to be buried at the foot of the rock in which dwelt the Goddess of the Mountain.

The memory of her father was dear to her, and every day she made a pilgrimage to his tomb, and prayed fervently for his soul's health. Many years passed away, and although age had made her hair white as snow, and bowed her once graceful form, she failed not in this pious duty. But once she went to the accustomed place and returned no more. Her husband and children followed in search of her. They found only her body, and as they gazed at it, weeping, the angel in the rose-coloured raiment came from the rock, and after kissing the dead Katherine on the forehead, took from her neck the diamond cross and flew with it heavenwards.

The bereaved husband, calling to his aid several of his comrades, made a grave for his wife in the great stone. As the body was being carried towards its last resting-place, two angels came flying down, lifted the coffin in their arms, and laid it inside the rock, covering afterwards the opening with a heavy block of stone; so that no one can tell where the body lies.

Since that time men have called the place where Katherine sleeps her never-ending sleep, the "Katestone!"

# THE SINGING STONE OF POSTELWITZ.

ON the right bank of the Elbe, not far from the ancient and picturesque town of Pirna, lies the small village of Postelwitz. Close to the village, and the river's brink, rises a high rock, whose summit commands a varied and extensive view of the valley of the Elbe, and the mountainous country towards the Bohemian frontier. On Sundays, holidays, and fine summer evenings, the young folks of the hamlet often assemble under the shadow of this rock, making it echo with their laughter and the noisy sound of merry games. But it sometimes happens that all voices are suddenly hushed, and a group, silent and attentive, gathers round the youth or maiden who tells the story of the rock, and how it came by the name of the "Singing Stone."

A long, long time ago, there was a shepherd of Pirna who every day led his sheep to pasture on the banks of the river—in the mornings he wandered with his flock up the stream, every evening he guided them downwards towards Pirna. Though young and handsome, his habits were quiet and solitary, his manner shy and distant. His love seemed to be entirely given to his sheep, whom he would sit watching under the leafy shadow of a tree, playing on his pipe the livelong day.

Once, as he lay on a bank of green turf, he saw on the other side of the river a beautiful maiden tending a flock of goats. The next day, and the next she was again there, and she looked so innocent and lovely, that at length the shepherd seized his pipe, and played to her one of his most passionate airs. She replied in the sweetest song that was ever heard. Then the youth made the maiden by gestures understand that he desired to have speech of her; she pointed to the tall rock over her head.

It was now evening, and the shepherd hastened homeward with his flock, saw them safely in the fold, and returned impatiently to the river's bank.

By the light of the moon he saw the maiden standing high on the rock. A bold swimmer, he plunged into the stream, and, breasting its rushing waters, was quickly by the side of his shepherdess. Their mutual love, already expressed in music and song, was now acknowledged in words, and it was midnight ere the lovers separated, and the youth returned to his home. On the following night, and every night that the friendly moonbeams lighted his way over the dark river, the shepherd failed not in his visits to the rock, and when the ruler of night had waxed and waned three times, he had agreed with the maiden that on the next Sunday he would cross the river, and beg her parents to sanction their love, and bestow on him her hand.

At the appointed time she again stood on the rock and waited for her lover; but he came not. In the morning, as she tended her flock, and looked over the Elbe, she saw that the sheep were indeed there, as of yore, but they were watched by another shepherd. And she feared some ill had happened to him she loved. When evening came, she once more sought the great stone, and as the bright moon illumined craggy peak, and flowing stream,

sang her sweetest songs. But still her dear youth came not, and she went away full of sadness and sorrow. For the third time, she returned to the old trysting-place, and bending her earnest gaze into the rushing waters beneath, she threw her whole soul into her voice, sang again her lover's favourite songs, and begged, in tenderest accents, that her dear shepherd would meet her yet once more. The hour of midnight approached, the full moon shed his yellow and ghostly light over the scene, when, rising slowly through the fog that enshrouded the river, the unhappy maiden could see a tall white figure, which floated higher and higher until it stood by her side.

Terror paralyzed her limbs, and sealed her lips.

"Fear not," said the phantom, "I am thy betrothed. As I sped homeward through the river, after our last meeting, the deities of the stream drew me beneath the water. I belong no more to earth. Sing me now thy last song, it shall be my death-song."

She sang it, and as with the vanishing tones of her voice the figure of her lover faded from sight and mingled with the moonbeams, she sank un-

conscious on the rock. She slept there her death-sleep; and even yet sometimes at midnight, when the silvery sheen of the full moon lights up the rock, may the singing of a sorrowful voice be heard; therefore is it called the "singing-stone," and every year, on the "death-day" of the bride, angels hover over the rock, and strew it with roses and lilies.

# THE NIXY OF ROSSENDORF MERE.

AMONGST the hills on the right bank of the Elbe, and close to the Dresden-Bautzen road, is a somewhat diminutive lake, known as Rossendorf Mere (*Teich*), the source of the Priesnitz brook, whose waters, once greatly renowned for their curative qualities, join the Elbe near the baths of Luik. There is at present, in the centre of the mere, an islet and a forester's hut. In former times, when the lake was much more extensive than now, the islet was a lofty island, and, instead of a forester's hut, contained a chapel and an altar dedicated to the holy Barbara.

The place bore—for the site of a Christian temple—the rather inappropriate name of "Nixy's Hill." It is said that many hundreds of years since,

when heathens still ruled in the land, and the rivers and glens of Old Saxony were still haunted by sprites and fairies, a colony of Christians, wandering in search of a home, pitched their tents in the forest and founded the village of Eschdorf. These Christians belonged to no morose or gloomy sect, but, delighted to make merry and enjoy themselves, were particularly fond of music and song, and on summer evenings, when work was done, it was the wont of the lads and lasses to assemble on the village green and laugh, and joke, and dance right lustily to the sound of tabor and fife. On these festive occasions there scarcely ever failed to be present an unknown maiden of strange and striking beauty. She danced with wonderful grace, was always richly clad; but it was noticed that the edge of her robe was always wet, as if she had walked across damp or dewy meadows. No one knew whence she came or whither she went. The rustic gallants of the hamlet were on fire with curiosity and admiration, and many were the attempts made to trace the mysterious stranger to her home in the forest, if home she had; but all were in vain—she evaded pursuit as easily as if she had been a zephyr or a sunbeam.

At length one happy and stalwart youth, more fortunate than his companions, succeeded in winning the maiden's favour, and extorted from her a reluctant promise to be allowed to accompany her on her way home. She led him to the shore of Rossendorf Mere, and there she wished to bid him adieu; but with love excited, and curiosity unsatisfied, he refused to leave her.

"Very well," said the maiden; "my father is not at home to-night; thou mayest, therefore, go with me to our cottage; but should he return and see thee, then are we both undone."

With these words the nixy—for nixy she was—smote the mere with her wand, whereon the water divided, laying bare a narrow path, over which the wondering youth and the beautiful sprite passed to the island in the lake. Arrived there the latter again smote the mere, and the path was lost to sight. Early next morning, just as the first faint glimmerings of dawn tinged the distant hills with a ruddy glow, there was heard a sound as of rushing water.

"Quick! quick!" exclaimed the nixy; "my father comes; hide thyself, or we are lost!"

Scarcely had the villager concealed himself in a baking-trough, when an old man of gigantic stature and savage aspect entered the cottage. He looked suspiciously around, fiercely snuffing the air.

"Ah! I smell a Christian!"

"How can Christians come here?" said his daughter; "but perhaps I smell *of Christian*, for I cannot deny that during your absence I have been to the dance at Eschdorf."

The old man reproved her harshly for her indiscretion, and still glaring fiercely about, to the great dismay of the gallant, who, from his place in the baking-trough, could see all that passed, fell to on the ample breakfast the nixy had set before him. That finished, he flung himself on his bed of rushes, and soon, by his loud snoring, gave token that he was fast asleep. Now, the maiden quietly brought the youth from his hiding-place, and by means of her magic wand, opened to him the path through the lake. He ran fearfully homeward, and never more sought the banks of Rossendorf Mere, nor was the beautiful stranger ever again seen on the village green of Eschdorf.

## THE SAGA OF THE SERPENT KING.

IN the castle and village of Lübbenau—ancient possessions of the Counts of Lynar—as well as in the numerous branches of the river Spree, are found many water-snakes. The country people hold them to be quite harmless, except to the cows, whose milk they often steal, to the great dismay and confusion of the milkmaids. In old times every house had its couple of snakes, who were, however, never visible until the man of the house, or his wife, died, and in that event they never failed to show themselves before the body was carried away to its last resting-place in the churchyard, and then they too died.

These serpents had a king, a snake of huge pro-

portions, long and strong. His head was furnished with two bended hooks, to which was generally attached a white ivory-like crown. One day a fisherman, who, in the early part of the present century, was still living, went to a stream near the castle to fish; and when he drew out his net he found, to his surprise, that he had caught a great serpent, with a strange white ornament on his head. After the manner of people in those parts, who invariably kill all reptiles that come in their way, the fisherman took his oar, and dealt the crowned snake a lusty blow, upon which indignity his serpentine majesty gave a loud whistle. Immediately snakes came swarming from all directions, the water was alive with them, and swayed up and down, as if it too were a serpent. They wriggled into the fisherman's boat, they twisted in hundreds round the oar with which he had attacked the king, and approached their enemy with angry looks and fire-darting tongues. He, poor man, was at first so surprised that he could not stir a limb. Then, uttering a loud yell, he threw down his oar, and fled on the wings of fear. A great multitude of snakes, determined to avenge their outraged

monarch, rushed after the rash man. Nearer and nearer they came; they were close at his heels; they had all but caught him; when—inspired by a happy thought—he threw behind him his coat. His pursuers, supposing it to be at least a part of their enemy, seized it with avidity, and breathless, and almost terrified to death, the fisherman finally escaped with a whole skin. The next day the coat was found, bitten in a thousand places.

It was an old belief that any one fortunate enough to capture the crown of the Serpent King would acquire great riches, and once upon a time there was a man of sufficient boldness and resolution to conceive the idea of securing for himself this wealth-conferring emblem of royalty. The better to escape the rage of the revengeful snakes, he took with him a swift horse, and on a fine morning in May, in a meadow under the walls of the castle of Lübbenau he spread out a fair white cloth; for, as is well known, the Serpent King is a monarch of dainty habits, and delights to find anything white and clean whereon to lay his heavy crown, whilst he disports himself at ease with his companions and courtiers. This done, the adventurer concealed

himself and his steed behind an alder-bush, and soon, to his great delight, he saw the king, with a numerous suite of attendant serpents, come meandering across the meadow. The crown, with some ceremony, was immediately taken off and deposited with great care exactly in the middle of the cloth, and the monarch and his chosen friends proceeded to sun themselves and frisk about in the court-yard of the old castle. The cavalier now stepped softly forward, took up cloth and crown together, jumped on his horse, and galloped away. He heard a tremendous whistling and rushing behind him; but he was well mounted, and speedily reached the city, where he was safe from pursuit. He told none of the treasure he had won, but he ever after grew richer and richer, and even to this day his house is one of the richest merchant-houses of the town, although, probably, even his own descendants may have forgotten the secret of their family's wealth. It is true that the fisherman, whose adventure has already been related, saw something white on the head of the Serpent King. This was doubtless not the crown, but the hooks to which it was formerly fastened.

The snakes of late years have greatly diminished

in numbers—an additional confirmation of the truth of the Saga. The arms of the Counts of the Lynar are a crowned snake on a shield, near a wall—a circumstance which may be held to indicate that the counts are descendants of the hero who so daringly captured the crown of the Serpent King.

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